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RAMPARTS OF EMPIRE:
INDIA'S NORTH-WEST FRONTIER AND BRITISH IMPERIALISM, 1919-1947

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INDIA'S NORTH-WEST FRONTIER AND BRITISH IMPERIALISM, 1919-1947

by

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For Anne

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This study examines the relationship between British perceptions and policies regarding India's North-West Frontier and its Pathan inhabitants and the decline of British power in the subcontinent from 1919 to 1947. Its central argument is that two key constituencies within the framework of British India, the officers of the Indian Army and the Indian Political Service, viewed the Frontier as the most crucial region within Britain's Indian Empire. Generations of British officers believed that this was the one place in India where the British could suffer a "knockout blow" from either external invasion or internal revolt. In light of this, when confronted by a full-scale Indian nationalist movement after the First World War, the British sought to seal off the Frontier from the rest of India.

Confident that they had inoculated the Frontier against nationalism, the British administration on the Frontier carried on as if it were 30 years earlier, fretting about possible Soviet expansion, tribal raids, and Afghan intrigues. This emphasis on external menaces proved costly, however, as it blinded the British to local discontent and the rapid

growth of a Frontier nationalist movement by the end of the 1920s. When the Frontier administration belatedly realized that they faced a homegrown nationalist movement they responded with a combination of institutional paralysis and brutality that underscored the British belief that the region constituted the primary bulwark of the British Raj.

This violence proved counterproductive. It engendered wide-scale nationalist interest in the Frontier and effectively made British policy in the region a subject of All-Indian political debate. The British responded to mounting nationalist pressure in the 1930s by placing the Frontier at the center of their successful efforts to retain control of India's defence establishment. This was a short-lived stopgap, however. By the last decade of British rule much of the Frontier was under the administration of the Indian National Congress. Moreover, the British not only concluded that Indian public opinion must be taken into account when formulating policy, but that nationalist prescriptions for the "problem" of the North-West Frontier should be enacted.

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ABREVIATIONS

AC	Assistant Commissioner
AICC	All-India Congress Committee
CSAS	Centre of South Asian Studies, Cambridge University
DC	Deputy Commissioner
FCR	Frontier Crimes Regulation
HMG	His Majesty's Government
ICS	Indian Civil Service
IES	Indian Empire Society
IDL	Indian Defence League
IOR	India Office Records, British Library, London
KOYLI	King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry
NAI	National Archives of India, New Delhi
NMML	Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi
NWFP	North-West Frontier Province
PA	Political Agent
RAF	Royal Air Force
TNA	The National Archives of the United Kingdom (PRO), London

INTRODUCTION

Testifying before the British Government's Committee of Imperial Defence in May 1927, the recently retired former Viceroy of India, Lord Reading, stated that India's mountainous North-West Frontier constituted Britain's "dominating problem" in South Asia.[1] This assertion, made in an era in which Indian nationalists increasingly challenged the foundations of British rule over the subcontinent, seems striking. Yet it is ultimately unsurprising that the man who had recently enjoyed nearly autocratic power over India's 300 million souls would identify unrest on the North-West Frontier with Afghanistan as the greatest problem confronting the British Raj. Ever since the British extended their rule to the Afghan borderlands in the mid nineteenth century, British officials and soldiers had fixated on the "problem" of the Frontier: Afghan wars, Russian expansion, and rebellion among the region's Pathan tribes.[2] The Frontier, where a distinct geography and culture both challenged and reinforced the various ideologies of the Raj, was an imperial obsession.

This study examines the relationship between British perceptions and policies regarding India's North-West Frontier and its Pathan inhabitants, and the decline of British power in the subcontinent from 1919 to 1947.[3] Its central argument is that two

[1] Committee of Imperial Defence: Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the Defence of India Sub-Committee, 10 May 1927, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA) CAB 16/83.

[2] As one Frontier officer succinctly put it: "British Indian frontier policy had two objectives – one imperial, to secure the best possible position from which to repel an overland attack by a European power; and the other domestic, to secure life and property against tribal raiders and outlaws sheltered by them" (Unpublished Memoirs of G.C.S. Curtis, Collected Indian Civil Service Memoirs, India Office Records (IOR), F180/58).

[3] A note on terminology: The Pashto speaking people of Eastern Afghanistan and what is now Western Pakistan are known variously as Pushtuns, Pakhtuns, Pukhtuns and, archaically, as Pathans. In order to avoid confusion I use the older word "Pathan" as the primary sources for this period, both British and Indian, universally refer to this ethnic group by this name. Likewise, the term "tribe" for the agnatic lineage groups living in this region was used by contemporaries and is still used today, by both government and anthropologists. In this case "tribe" does not necessarily carry the "condescending, atavistic connotations" it often carries in Africa, the Americas, and much of Asia. Rather it follows Evans-Pritchard's classic study of Sudan's Nuer people, in which "tribe" refers to "political groups defined by territory and by accepted mechanisms for the settlement of disputes" rather than by a central authority. The term "tribe" continues to be used by both anthropologists and the Government of Pakistan, and the unadministered belt of territory between Pakistan and Afghanistan has the official title "Federally Administered Tribal Areas" (FATA) (See Hugh Beattie, *Imperial Frontier: Tribe and State in Waziristan* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2002), p.

key constituencies within the framework of British India, the officers of the Indian Army and the Indian Political Service, viewed the Frontier as the most crucial region within Britain's Indian Empire and, indeed, the entire British Empire. Generations of British officers believed that this was the one place in India where the British could suffer a "knockout blow" from either external invasion or internal revolt.[4] In light of this, when confronted by a full-scale Indian nationalist movement in the wake of the First World War, the British sought to seal off the Frontier from the rest of India and tighten their grip on Frontier society. A new "forward policy" was adopted in the tribal regions, reforms were blocked, political parties and newspapers were banned and movement between the Frontier and the rest of India was curtailed.

Confident that they had inoculated the Frontier against nationalism, the British administration on the Frontier carried on as if it were 30 years earlier, fretting about possible Russian invasion, tribal raids, and Afghan intrigue. This emphasis on external menaces to the Indian Empire proved costly, as it blinded the British to local discontent and the rapid growth of a Frontier nationalist movement in the 1920s. When the Frontier administration belatedly realized that they faced a homegrown nationalist movement, they responded with a combination of institutional paralysis and brutality that underscored the British belief that the region constituted the primary bulwark of the British Raj.

This violence proved counterproductive. It engendered wide-scale nationalist interest in the Frontier and effectively made British policy in the region a subject of All-Indian political debate. The British responded to mounting nationalist pressure in the 1930s by placing the Frontier at the center of their successful efforts to retain control of India's defence establishment. This was a short-lived stopgap, however. By the last decade of British rule, much of the Frontier was under the administration of the Indian

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244; and Noor ul Haq, *Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan* (Islamabad: Islamabad Policy Research Institute, 2005)). Lastly, this study uses standard American spelling and punctuation. The exception is that it uses the British spelling of "defence" due to the prevalence of this word in the original sources – many of which are quoted throughout the dissertation.

[4] Lt.-Colonel C.E. Bruce, "Memorandum" in *Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform [Session 1932-33], Volume 2C: Minutes of Evidence* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1934), p. 1689, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML).

National Congress. Moreover, the British not only concluded that Indian public opinion must be taken into account when formulating policy, but also that nationalist prescriptions for the "problem" of the North-West Frontier should be enacted. The Raj's attempt to seal off the Frontier failed. The fact that it failed, despite the widely held conviction that the existence of Britain's Indian Empire rested on untrammeled British control over the Frontier, demonstrates a retreat of British power in the sub-continent during this period.

This is a study of British imperialism in South Asia. Although it addresses events on the Frontier and in India in this period, it is primarily interested in the thoughts, perceptions, and actions of the British in India and, to a lesser degree, the westernized Indian elite that made up the nationalist leadership.[5] This stems in from the questions and debates that this dissertation engages. These include the manner in which British prejudices and assumptions about the Frontier and its Pathan population affected their policies in the region; the role and character of the elite Indian Political Service that administered the Frontier; the relationship between the Frontier and British imperial retreat in South Asia during the interwar period.

BRITISH PERCEPTIONS OF THE PATHAN

The first Briton to encounter what would become the Indian Empire's North-West Frontier and the Pathans who inhabited this region was Mountstuart Elphinstone in 1808. The entire region was then under the sway of the Afghan kingdom based at Kabul.

[5] The historian of the North-West Frontier in this period is constrained by the nature of the archival sources available. Most notably one is confronted by the problem of illiteracy throughout the Frontier during the British period – especially within the tribal areas – leading to a dearth of archival material reflecting local views. Outside of the letters and proclamations circulated by literate religious leaders on the Frontier there is little hard evidence for surmising the motivations of the tribesmen on the eve of a raid, or why the peasantry of the Peshawar District became engaged in the nationalist movement in the 1930s. Almost all studies of the NWFP in this era ultimately fall back on the British imperial archive. Two notable exceptions are Haroon's *Frontier of Faith* and Mukulika Banerjee's *The Pathan Unarmed* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001). These two studies, which are, respectively, interested in the nature of religious leadership in the tribal belt and in the Gandhian aspects of the Frontier nationalist movement, employ oral history and Pashto writings to good effect. Both studies, however, are also firmly grounded in the British archive.

Elphinstone's view of the Pathan character was that "their vices are revenge, envy, avarice, rapacity and obstinacy; on the other hand, they are fond of liberty, faithful to their friends, kind to their dependents, hospitable, brave, hardy, frugal, laborious, and prudent."[6] Although Elphinstone's appraisal remained the abiding British view of the Pathan mentality for the remainder of British rule on the subcontinent, the primary aspect of this description that the British focused on was what they saw as the Pathan's love of liberty. Over the next century and half, the British were motivated to emphasize this trait both for reasons of strategy and also by what they actually observed.[7]

Pathan society varies greatly, and the form it takes is related to geography. The inner workings of Pathan culture in the Vale of Peshawar are different from that in the passes of the Hindu-Kush, just as this varies from that of the deserts of what is now Southern Afghanistan. Yet, by and large, Pathan society has a unique power structure that lent itself to what the British viewed as a predilection for "independence."[8] The structure of Pathan society falls into the category of "segmentary lineage," and they are divided into a hierarchy of tribes, clans or *khels*, sections, and families. These groups define themselves through their patrilineal descent from a mythical common male ancestor. Within these groupings Pathan society is notable in that it is generally acephalous, with no distinct internal hierarchy or hereditary leadership.[9] Certain families possess more prestige than others, but in many ways it is an "untrammeled democracy," with each man

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[6] Mountstuart Elphinstone, *An Account of the Kingdom of Caubul and its Dependencies in Persia, Tartary, and India*, Vol. 1 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1819), p. 400.

[7] The anthropologist Charles Lindholm makes the case that although Raj era ethnography of the Pathans was informed by colonial policies and prejudices, the claim that these studies are only valid for examining the workings of imperialism goes too far. "Not only would this position eliminate as ideologically corrupt some of our most important sources on the Pathans, it also has a more insidious significance. Such a viewpoint does not give any credit to Pathan culture as an autonomous structure which is perfectly capable of impressing itself upon the observer" (Charles Lindholm, "Images of the Pathan: The Usefulness of Colonial Ethnography," in Charles Lindholm, *Frontier Perspectives: Essays in Comparative Anthropology* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 3-16).

[8] Edward Oliver, *Across the Border: Or Pathan and Biloch* (London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1890), p. 224.

[9] This was not always the case. The chief example from the twentieth century is the Wali of Swat, a local leader who managed to bring the entirety of the Swat valley in the northern region of the North-West Frontier under his hereditary rule in the 1920s (See Frederik Barth, *Political Leadership Among the Swat Pathans* (London: The Athlone Press, 1965); and Frederik Barth and Miangul Jahanzeb, *The Last Wali of Swat: An Autobiography* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

considering himself equal, if not superior, to his neighbor.[10] In this essentially egalitarian society, the headmen or *maliks*, who fulfill the role of elder, rather than chief of each tribe, often enjoy their position by dint of their heredity, but just as often a headman possess his rank as a result of personal bravery, wisdom, or strength. Ultimately the entire social structure is premised on "equality, individualism, and fierce competition." This system bodes ill for attempts at outside control. Lastly, since Islam, rather than a political structure, stands as primary tie within Pathan society as a whole, religious leadership often comes to the fore in times of stress or war.[11]

When Elphinstone wrote about the Pathan's "fondness for liberty" in the early nineteenth century he identified this trait as a positive attribute. Sir Olaf Caroe, one of the premier Frontier officers of the twentieth century, noted in his masterwork on the Pathans that Elphinstone viewed the Pathans not through the eyes of a would-be-conqueror but as someone looking for possible allies in the subcontinent. Elphinstone's views were shaped by the fact that he met the Pathans "before they had become embittered by a long succession of expeditions and war, and he felt intuitively that there was a bond to be forged between 'them' and 'us.'"[12]

The "long succession of wars" began with the First Anglo-Afghan War of 1839-1842. This and subsequent experiences in the nineteenth century would dramatically change the light in which the British viewed the Pathan's "love of independence." The Anglo-Afghan War of 1839-42, Britain's first conflict with the Pathan tribesmen in the mountains west of the Indus constituted one of the greatest defeats in British imperial history. The conflict grew out of British fears of Russian expansion in Central Asia, or, as Kipling dubbed it: the "Great Game."[13] Convinced that "if we do not stop Russia on the

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[10] James W. Spain, *The Way of the Pathans*, 2nd Edition (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 25.

[11] See Lindholm, "Images of the Pathan," pp. 12-13; and Barth, *Political Leadership*, Chapter Two. For an in depth analysis of the role of religious leadership in the tribal areas in the first half of the twentieth century see Sana Haroon's recent *Frontier of Faith: Islam in the Indo-Afghan Borderland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

[12] See Sir Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans, 550B.C.-A.D.1957* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1958), p. 278.

[13] There are numerous works on the "Great Game," or as the Russians called it: "the Tournament of Shadows." For the entire history of this 150 year battle for supremacy in Central Asia see Peter Hopkirk's volumes on the subject, including: *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia* (New York: Oxford

Danube, we shall have to stop her on the Indus," the British invaded Afghanistan with the goal of installing a pliant Amir on the throne in Kabul.[14] The initial conflict was short and the British Army of the Indus occupied the Afghan capital.[15] But the victory was short-lived and the after surviving a long siege by the ousted Amir and his tribal levies, the British were obliged to retire towards Jalalabad and thence to India. In the process of this retreat, carried out in the middle of the winter and led by incompetent officers, the British were massacred by the tribesmen who guarded the narrow mountain passes. Of a combined 16,000 soldiers and followers, only one man, William Brydon, an assistant surgeon, made it to Jalalabad in a scene immortalized in Elizabeth Butler's painting.[16]

University Press, 1991); *Like Hidden Fire: The Plot to Bring Down the British Empire* (New York: Kodansha Globe, 1997); *Setting the East Ablaze: On Secret Service in Bolshevik Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). Also see Karl E. Meyer and Shareen Blair Brysac, *Tournament of Shadows: The Great Game and the Race for Empire in Central Asia* (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 1999). For the earlier period see Malcolm Yapp, *Strategies of British India: Britain, Iran, and Afghanistan, 1798-1850* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1980); Edward Ingram, *Commitment to Empire: Prophecies of the Great Game in Asia, 1797-1800* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1981); and Edward Ingram, *The Beginning of the Great Game in Asia, 1828-1834* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1979). For the latter half of the nineteenth century see C.C. Davies' classic and indispensible *The Problem of the North-West Frontier 1890-1908: With a Survey of Policy since 1849* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932); Rose Louise Greaves, *Persia and the Defence of India, 1884-1892: A Study in the Foreign Policy of the Third Marquis of Salisbury* (London: The Athlone Press, 1959); and Jennifer Siegel, *Endgame: Britain, Russia and the Final Struggle for Central Asia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002). For the twentieth century see Milan Hauner, *India in Axis Strategy: Germany, Japan, and Indian Nationalists in the Second World War* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981). For the end of British rule see Peter John Brobst, *The Future of the Great Game: Sir Olaf Caroe, India's Independence, and the Defense of Asia* (Akron: University of Akron Press, 2005). The fictional literature on the Great Game is also vast and is almost a genre unto itself. It includes treasures such as Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (New York: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1914); George MacDonald Fraser, *Flashman in the Great Game: A Novel* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1975); John Masters, *The Lotus in the Wind* (New York: Ballantine, 1969); and John Buchan, *Greenmantle* (New York: George H. Doran and Co,. 1916).

[14] Lord John Russell quoted in Charles Miller, *Khyber: British India's North West Frontier, The Story of an Imperial Migraine* (New York: Macmillan, 1977), p. 20. Miller's narrative history is the single best one-volume work on the North-West Frontier and Afghanistan in the British period.

[15] The incumbent on the Afghan throne, Dost Mohammad, in fact preferred an alliance with Britain to one with Russia. He also wanted to regain his winter capital of Peshawar that had been seized by the ruler of the Punjab, Ranjit Singh. Aware of this the Court of Directors of the East India Company plumped for Ranjit Singh, concluding that Dost Mohammad was an enemy who should be overthrown (Miller, *Khyber*, Chapters Two and Three).

[16] See Miller, *Khyber*, Chapters One through Seven. Also see Sir John Kaye, *History of the War in Afghanistan*, 3 vols. (London: Richard Bentley, 1858); J. A. Norris, *The First Afghan War, 1838–1842* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); and John W. Waller, *Beyond the Khyber Pass: The Road to Disaster in the First Afghan War* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990). For the retreat from Kabul see Patrick Macrory, *Signal Catastrophe: The Story of a Disastrous Retreat from Kabul, 1842* (London:

This utter disaster served to confirm the British view that the Pathans were, to put it mildly, fond of their liberty. It also sowed the belief that the Pathans, as a race, were bloodthirsty and duplicitous. The vanquished Army of the Indus, after all, was exterminated in spite of the Amir's promise of safe conduct. From this point onward the British concluded that the people of the Afghan borderlands were "cruel" and "treacherous."[17]

In 1849 the East India Company annexed the Sikh state of the Punjab and in its train they inherited a large population of Pathans and a North-West Frontier with Afghanistan. For the first two decades the British attempted to manage the region through a mixture of indirect rule through local chieftains and – aware of the Pathan dislike for central control – left the hills untaxed and unadministered.[18] Despite this relatively light hand, the British were nevertheless confronted by Pathan tribesmen in the hills who regularly "plundered and burnt our villages and [slew] our subjects,…fired upon our own troops and even killed our officers in our territory." Moreover, they sheltered outlaws and kidnapped British subjects.[19] These issues were the nucleus of the local dimension of the "problem" of the North-West Frontier.

By the 1880s the British had honed their tools of coercion on the Frontier. This included fines, blockades, and expeditions. The abiding philosophy was that "when dealing with the savage tribes the best plan is, to fight as rarely as possible; and when you do fight, to hit them as hard as you can."[20] This approach grew out of a British perception of the Pathan character that had reached full maturity by the close of the nineteenth century. It is best summed up by the following:

> For centuries he has been, on our frontier as least, subject to no man. He leads a wild, free, active life in the rugged fastness of his mountains; and there is an air of masculine

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Hodder & Stoughton, 1966); and Florentia Wynch Sale, Patrick Arthur Macrory and William Brydon, *The First Afghan War* (London: Longmans, 1969).

[17] Arnold Keppel, *Gun Running and the Indian North-West Frontier* (London: John Murray, 1911), p. 5.

[18] For the early period of British tribal management in Waziristan see Beattie, *Imperial Frontier*.

[19] Report on Relations with the Frontier Tribes by R. Temple, Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of the Punjab, 1855, quoted in W.H. Paget and A.H. Mason, *Record of Expeditions Against the Tribes of the North-West Frontier* (Calcutta: General Headquarter India, 1885), pp. 10-11.

[20] Davies, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier*, p. 26.

> independence about him which is refreshing in a country like India. He is a bigot of the most fanatical type, exceedingly proud, and extraordinarily superstitious.[21]

Yet, although the British believed the Pathans to be "treacherous, superstitious, and priest-ridden," there was a concurrent belief that when an Englishman or Scot met a Pathan he "met a man like himself."[22] Kipling was one of many who believed that although East was East and West was West, when an Englishman encountered a Pathan, they met, if not as equals, then at least as kindred spirits.[23]

Despite his "flaws" the Pathan was *a man*; a man who fought for his independence and took orders from no one. They were often compared to the Scottish Highlanders of the eighteenth century.[24] Whereas the Indian plains were a place of "effeminate indolence," the Frontier offered a manly existence of adventure and danger for the British against a strong and unrelenting foe.[25] This contradictory view of the

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[21] Paget, *Record of Expeditions*, p. 8.

[22] General Staff Memorandum on North-West Frontier Policy, 1 November 1920, (IOR) L PO 4/4. The British relationship with the Pathans was notoriously complicated, with the British often feeling a true admiration and even affection for their erstwhile enemies. This relationship is best summed up in a story about the uprising of 1936-1937 in which the local (British) Political Agent disappeared at the beginning of a campaign day against a rebellious tribal *lashkar*, only to return at night to ask how the British "side" had done before remarking that his "side" (the *lashkar*) had done quite well (Alan Warren, *Waziristan, the Faqir of Ipi, and the Indian Army: The North West Frontier Revolt of 1936-37* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 27).

[23] Rudyard Kipling, "The Ballad of East and West" in *Ballads and Barrack Room Ballads* (New York: Doubleday & McClure Co., 1899), pp. 3-11. There are a number of biographies of Kipling and a vast amount of criticism of his literature. Biographies include Charles Carrington, *Rudyard Kipling: His Life and Work* (London: Macmillan, 1955); F.W. Smith, Earl of Birkenhead, *Rudyard Kipling* (New York: Random House, 1978); and Harry Ricketts, *The Unforgiving Minute: A Life of Rudyard Kipling* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999). David Gilmour's political Biography of Kipling is very helpful in understanding Kipling's imperialism and his relationship to the great issues of his day (David Gilmour, *The Long Recessional: The Imperial Life of Rudyard Kipling* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2002). Also instructional on Kipling's vision of India and imperialism are Louis L. Cornell, *Kipling in India* (London: Macmillan, 1966); Lewis D. Wurgaft, *The Imperial Imagination: Magic and Myth in Kipling's India* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1983); Thomas Pinney, *Kipling's India: Uncollected Sketches, 1884-*88 (London: Macmillan, 1986); and Charles Allen, *Kipling Sahib: India and the Making of Rudyard Kipling* (New York: Little, Brown, 2007).

[24] See, for example, Oliver, *Across the Border*, p. 224; and Note by Col. C.H. Hasell (Chief Engineer, Waziristan) to the Indian Statutory Commission, 4 April 1928, Simon Papers (IOR) F77/47.

[25] The best work on the Raj's penchant for gendering its Indian subjects into "effeminate" and "masculine" groupings is found in Mrinalini Sinha's *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and The 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995). This was also related to the British belief in "martial races" in India. For the development and societal implications of "martial race theory," see Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture, 1857-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); Lionel Caplan, *Warrior Gentlemen: "Gurkhas" in the Western Imagination* (Oxford: Berghahn Books,

Pathan character, which remained in place until the end of British rule, is a prime example of Thomas Metcalf's conflicting ideologies of "sameness" and "difference" in British imperial thought in India. [26] It also led the British to pursue a policy that dealt with the Pathans as both "savages" and "men." Unlike the "babus" and Hindu lawyers of the nascent Indian National Congress, the men of the Frontier were not the type who yearned to take a civil service examination or serve on a municipal water council. Instead, the Pathan was a man of action who lived and died by the sword.[27] Violence was what the Pathan understood. The British responded to this perception by subjecting the Pathans to the draconian Frontier Crimes Regulation when they were within British

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1995); Tan Tai Yong, *The Garrison State: Military, Government and Society in Colonial Punjab, 1849-1947* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, Ltd., 2005); and Richard G. Fox, *Lions of the Punjab: Culture in the Making* (New Delhi: Archives Publishers, 1987). Fox's study of martial race theory and Sikhism is particularly interesting, as it convincingly argues that that modern Khalsa identity was shaped almost exclusively by Sikh service in the British Indian Army.

[26] Metcalf argues that Britain's role in the subcontinent was undergirded by "ideologies" rather than one ideology in particular. Building in large part, it seems, on Eric Stokes' *The English Utilitarians in India* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1959), Metcalf argues that the British devised two divergent strategies to justify their authority; one defined essential characteristics which the Indians shared with the British themselves, while the other emphasized the presumed qualities of enduring difference. While an ideology of "sameness," or at least assimilation, stood as the dominant principle before the Mutiny (Macaulay's desire to make "brown" Englishmen, for instance), the creed of "difference" – in history, race, gender, and society – predominated British views on India and Indian society in the second half of the nineteenth century. Metcalf is careful to show the nuances of these "ideologies," however, and successfully illustrates the fact that neither philosophy ever fully eclipsed the other (Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). The fact that British racial views on the Pathans remained essentially static until the 1940s is borne out in a number of official documents, such as the General Staff's Memorandum on North-West Frontier Policy from 1920, which uses the exact same words to describe the Pathan mentality as Major-General W.H. Paget's description in 1884 (see Paget, *Record of Expeditions*, p. 10). Philip Mason puts it best in *The Guardians* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954): "Another constant was the Frontier. Here the tribes were still treated like tigers in a national park. They could kill what deer they liked in the park; they risked a bullet if they came outside and took the village cattle. That had been the position in 1900 and it was still a fair description in 1947" (p. 291).

[27] A classic example of the British juxtaposition between the westernized "babu" and the "free and masculine" Pathan warrior is found in Rudyard Kipling's short story "The Head of the District," which first appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine* in January 1890 and was collected in *Life's Handicap* the following year. At the end of the story, after the Pathans have gone on a rampage for fear of having an "infidel" Bengali Indian Civil Servant sent to administer their frontier district, the British protagonist, Tallantire, remarks to the Pathan leader, "'Get hence to the hills – go, and wait there starving, till it shall please the Government to call thy people out for punishment – children and fools that ye be! Rest assured that the Government will send you a *man*!' 'Aye,' returned Khoda Dad Khan, 'for we also be men.' As he looked Tallantire in the eyes, he added, 'And by God, Sahib, may thou be that man!'" (Rudyard Kipling, *Life's Handicap: Being Stories of Mine Own People* (London: Macmillan, 1919), pp. 187-214).

territory and using a massive amount of force, in the form of military columns, or later, aerial bombardment, when dealing with tribal unrest.

These perceptions of the Pathan character not only influenced the day to day tactics of fining, blockading, or attacking villages that had sent out *lashkars*, or war parties, to raid the plains, but also contributed to the debate over the wider policy on the Frontier. Beginning in the 1870s, the Government of India, Indian Army, and local Punjab administration were divided between two separate approaches to the North-West Frontier: the "close border" school, and those who advocated a "forward policy." [28] In the late nineteenth century the eastern boundaries of Afghanistan remained un-demarcated and the Amir's writ failed to extend among the Pathan tribes – the most famous of which were the Wazirs, Mahsuds, Mohmands, and Afridis – who resided in the mountains to the west of British territory. At the same time, the western frontier of British India stopped short of the mountains. This left a large swathe of tribal territory without the law. The close borderites maintained that the independent nature of the Pathans precluded any annexation of this region. It should be left entirely alone – essentially sealed off from the plains below. The forward school, however, maintained that the Pathans of the tribal territory, while vigorously independent, understood strength, and could, with the right combination of carrots and sticks, be convinced of the virtue of British rule. This group argued that the tribal areas beyond the administrative border should be slowly taken under British control and "civilized."

[28] There was a local and an international aspect to this debate. The local debate between the "close border" and "forward" policies focused on methods of controlling the trans-border tribes. The international side of this was a nineteenth century debate over whether British India should stop at the Indus (close border) or a "scientific" line from Kabul to Kandahar (forward) – neither side triumphed. For works on the international aspect of the "close border" and "forward" policies, see the aforementioned volumes on the Great Game. The most extreme example of the international "forward policy" was found in Lord Lytton's policy towards Afghanistan when he was Viceroy in the 1870s. Lytton, influenced by men such as Sir Frederick Roberts and egged on by Disraeli, was a staunch believer in the Russian menace and insisted on placing a diplomatic mission in Kabul to monitor the Afghans. When this mission was massacred in 1878, General Roberts was dispatched to Afghanistan and the second Anglo-Afghan War commenced. Britain eventually won, and Afghan foreign policy came under British control in exchange for a promise of protection – a promise that was proven to be hollow during the Panjdeh crisis in 1885 (see Charles Metcalfe MacGregor, *The Second Afghan War, 1878-80: Official Account* (London: John Murray, 1908); Brian Robson , *The Road to Kabul: The Second Afghan War, 1878-1881* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1986) and Sarvepalli Gopal, *British Policy in India, 1858-1905* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965).

In the 1890s the Government of India, more by chance than by design, applied the forward policy in the tribal areas. Often a column, sent to burn down the villages of a raiding tribal section, would stay on for several months. This gradually turned into a full-scale policy of occupation and pacification up and down the Frontier. The fact that both of the Viceroys in this period, Lansdowne and Elgin, happened to be Conservative solidified this process as the home government tended to support a forward policy.[29] It appears, however, that this thrust into the tribal belt led to a growth of unrest and disquietude. Alarmed that this increase in violence was sponsored by the Afghan Amir, the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, Sir Henry Durand, traveled to Kabul to finalize, once and for all, the British and Afghan spheres of influence in 1893. The Amir agreed and the boundary, known as the Durand Line, was demarcated between 1894 and 1896. It was an absurd attempt to turn an open frontier into a border.[30] The Line followed watersheds and paid little attention to the fact that it was splitting tribes, such as the Mohmands, in two. Nor did the Durand Line possess any strategic value. It created a number of salients that would prove costly in the event of another Afghan War. The one at Khost, between the Kurram valley and Waziristan, was the most notable.

Over both the short term and the long term the Durand Line created more problems than it solved and did nothing to stem the level of tribal unrest in what was now British tribal territory. The Frontier exploded in 1897 and the British were faced with revolts from Chitral in the north, to Waziristan in the south.[31] The revolt was eventually

[29] Davies, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier*, Chapter Five.

[30] As Matthew Edney argues in his *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1763-1843* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), mapping and boundary building was an essential tool of imperial control. Moreover, it created a "precise imperial space, a rational space within which a systematic archive of knowledge about Indian landscapes and people might be constructed (p. 319)." For the North-West Frontier see Simanti Dutta, *Imperial Mappings in Savage Spaces: Baluchistan and British India* (Delhi: B.R. Pub. Corp., 2003).

[31] The most recent work on the Frontier rising of 1897-98 is Michael Barthorp, *The Frontier Ablaze: The North-West Frontier Rising, 1897-98* (London: Windrow & Greene, 1996). Of the contemporary accounts the most famous was written by a young subaltern named Winston Churchill, who witnessed the revolt first hand as a press correspondent on the staff of General Sir Bindon Blood (Winston S. Churchill, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force* (London: Longmans, 1898)). Churchill's account aside, the 1897-98 war created a veritable cottage industry of eyewitness accounts for public consumption in Britain. A sampling includes Lionel James, *The Indian Frontier War: Being an Account of the Mohmund and Tirah Expeditions, 1897* (London: Heinemann, 1898); A. E. M. Dunmore, Viscount Fincastle, V.C., and P.C Eliott-Lockhart, *A Frontier Campaign: A Narrative of the Operations of the Malakand and Buner Field*

put down, but many now argued that the forward policy of the last decade had needlessly antagonized the tribes. The new Viceroy, Lord Curzon, characteristically decided that a radical new approach should be taken to problem of the Frontier.[32]

Curzon was a passionate "great gamer" and, as in most realms, he had strong ideas on what needed to be done to solve the problem. The Viceroy believed that the Frontier was so vital to India that it could no longer be administered by a provincial government or a provincial administrative cadre. He therefore severed the Frontier districts from the Punjab. Thus the "settled" districts of Hazara, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, and Dera Ismail Khan were split off from the Punjab to form the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). The tribal tracts adjacent to the settled districts were included in the NWFP and either made into tribal agencies, which included the Malakand, Khyber, Kurram, and north and south Waziristan, or recognized areas as independent tribal territory, such as the Tirah or Mohmand country.[33] Whether organized as an agency or an independent territory, these areas all came under the purview of a political agent. This political agent, however, had no administrative duties. He served as the Government's agent to the tribes, conducting relations between the independent tribes and the Government of British India. This arrangement repudiated the local dimension of the forward school, since it explicitly recognized the tribes as independent and also involved

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Forces, 1897-1898 (London: Methuen & Co., 1898); Major E. A. P. Hobday, *Sketches on Service During the Indian Frontier Campaigns of 1897* (London: James Bowden, 1898); and Col. H.D. Hutchinson, *The Campaign in Tirah, 1897-1898: An Account of the Expedition Against the Orakzais and Afridis Under General Sir William Lockhart, Based (by Permission) on Letters Contributed tóThe Times'* (London: Macmillan, 1898).

[32] There are several very good works dealing with Curzon and Curzon's Viceroyalty in India. For Curzon, the best starting place is David Gilmour's, *Curzon: Imperial Statesman* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003). Lord Ronaldshay's three volume authorized biography remains both readable and fascinating, however. Ronaldshay was something of a latter-day Curzonian, having traveled widely through Asia in his youth, serving as Governor of Bengal during Civil Disobedience and late presiding over the Royal Geographical Society. He later served (as Lord Zetland) as Secretary of State for India from 1936 to 1940 (see Lawrence John Lumley Dundas, the Earl of Ronaldshay, *The Life of Lord Curzon: Being the Authorized Biography of George Nathaniel, Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, K.G*, 3 Vols. (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1928). For India the best work remains David Dilks' two volumes, *Curzon in India*, vol. 1: *Achievement* and *Curzon in India*, vol. 2: *Frustration* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1969).

[33] The Political Agent, Malakand, was also responsible for the northern Pathan states of Chitral, Dir, and Swat, which were also incorporated into the NWFP.

the withdrawal of all regular army units from the tribal belt. This "modified close border" policy remained in place until 1919.

THE FRONTIER ADMINSTRATION AND THE INDIAN POLITICAL SERVICE

Ultimate control of the NWFP was placed in the hands of the Viceroy, but the day to day administration was carried out by a Chief Commissioner, a member of the Indian Political Service who reported to the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India.[34] Within the Government of India the Foreign Secretary was unique in that that he reported directly to the Viceroy, whereas the other secretaries (Home, Law, and Finance) reported to a member of the Viceroy's Council. The Foreign Secretary presided over the Foreign and Political Department, and was in charge of relations with the princely states, the Frontier tribes, and those territories that carried on direct relations with the Government of India, such as Tibet and the Persian Gulf States. After 1914 the portfolio was divided and a separate "political secretary" was given charge of the princely states.[35] From then, until the end of British rule, the position of Foreign Secretary was always filled by a member of the Frontier service. This close proximity of career Frontier officers to the Viceroy meant that throughout the 1920s and 1930s Frontier issues and problems always enjoyed a pride of place at the center of Government.[36]

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[34] In 1933 the position of Chief Commissioner was promoted to that of Governor. In his capacity as agent to the Governor-General in the North-West Frontier the Governor continued to report to the Foreign Secretary in Delhi. Following the establishment of ministerial responsibility over the settled districts in 1937, however, the Governor reported to the Viceroy when it came to the administered districts and to the Foreign Secretary, now styled "External Affairs" Secretary, when it came to tribal matters.

[35] See William Murray Hogben, "The Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India, 1876-1919: A Study in Imperial Careers and Attitudes" (University of Toronto Dissertation, 1973), p. vi.

[36] The Foreign Secretaries of the Government of India from 1914 to 1946, were as follows: Sir Alfred Hamilton Grant, 1914-19; Sir Henry Dobbs, 1919-22; Sir Denys Bray, 1922-28; Sir Evelyn Howell, 1928-1932; Sir Aubrey Metcalfe, 1932-39 (post was changed to "Secretary for External Affairs" in 1937); and Sir Olaf Caroe, 1939-1946. Several of the Foreign Secretaries in this period, notably Bray, Howell, and Caroe, also exercised a great deal of influence in Simla and New Delhi through the sheer weight of their personalities.

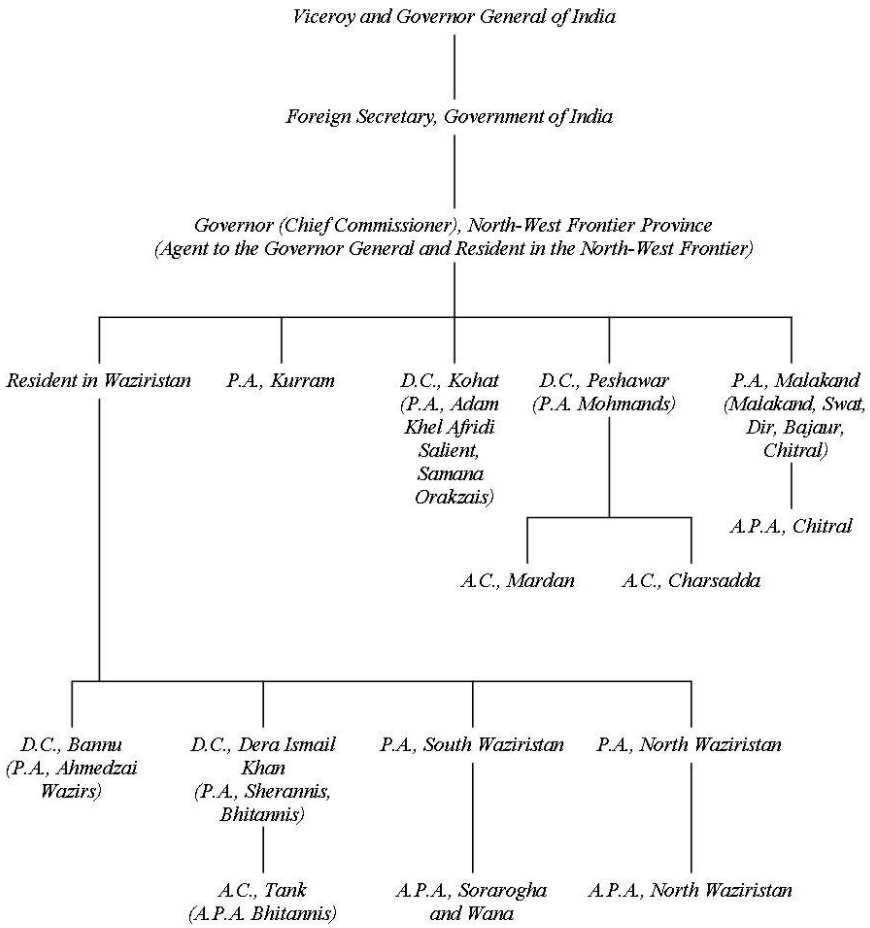

Illustration 1: Administrative Structure, NWFP

On the local level the apex of the Frontier administration included the Chief Commissioner, his Chief Secretary, and the Revenue Commissioner [**see Chart 1**]. Beneath the Chief Commissioner each settled district was headed by a Deputy Commissioner (D.C.), who often also served as Political Agent (P.A.) for the adjoining independent tribes. The independent tribal agencies, such as Kurram, possessed P.A.s

whose sole responsibility was that agency. The preeminent D.C. was the head of the populous Peshawar District. He also served as P.A. to the Mohmand tribe and had two Assistant Commissioners (A.C.), who administered the Peshawar subdivisions of Mardan and Charsadda. The other principal administrator in the NWFP was the Resident in Waziristan, who had nominal control over the D.C.s for Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan, and the P.A.s for North and South Waziristan.

The Frontier administration was staffed by members of the elite Indian Political Service. Controlled by the Foreign and Political Department, the Political Service was a small cadre of 120 to 170 officers, two thirds of whom were seconded from the Indian Army and the remaining third from the Indian Civil Service (ICS). They served in the Princely States, the Frontier (both NWFP and Baluchistan), and in the Raj's overseas diplomatic posts throughout the Middle East and Asia. The "Politicals" were the agents of the Britain's indirect rule throughout India and the Middle East.[37] In the Princely States and the Persian Gulf, the political officer, usually styled as "Resident," stood as the power behind the throne, "advising" his nominally independent charges.[38] In posts

[37] For an excellent overview of the workings of the Indian residency system in the Persian Gulf and elsewhere, see James Onley, *The Arabian Frontier of the British Raj: Merchants, Rulers, and the British in the Nineteenth-Century Gulf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Robert J. Blyth also provides an interesting account of the relationship between the India Office, Government of India, Foreign Office, and the Indian Political Service in exercising paramountcy over the Middle East and East Africa from the Indian Mutiny to independence in *The Empire of the Raj: India, Eastern Africa and the Middle East, 1858-1947* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003). The Indian Political Service made a massive mark on the history of the modern Middle East. The British conquered the various villayets of the Ottoman Empire with Indian troops during the First World War and Indian Political arrived in their wake. Perhaps no territory was more affected by the arrival of the Indian Political Service than the three Ottoman provinces that were to become Iraq. All the High Commissioners of the Iraq Mandate between 1918 and 1932 - Sir Arnold Wilson, Sir Percy Cox, Sir Henry Dobbs, and Sir Francis Humphrys - hailed from the Indian Political Service. The first High Commissioner, Wilson, attempted to implement Indian methods in Iraq – with disastrous results (see John Marlowe, Late *Victorian: The Life of Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson* (London: Cresset Press, 1967). Toby Dodge's fascinating *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003) also tackles the role of Indian Political Agents in the construction of Iraq in the mandate period. This included the use of air control against the Iraqi tribesmen, the clear preference for rural rather than urban leadership, and the enactment of a draconian law code based on the Frontier Crimes Regulation that was practiced in the NWFP and Baluchistan.

[38] The doctrine of indirect rule arose within the courts of Indian princely states in the late eighteenth century. For an analysis of the evolution of this system see Michael Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India: Residents and the Residency System, 1764-1858* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991). The doctrine is notable in that it was exported throughout the British Empire and in fact reached its full maturity among the Emirs of Northern Nigeria. Thomas Metcalf argues that the use of indirect rule was one of the ties that

situated in independent countries such as Afghanistan or Tibet, the Political Service functioned in a more traditional diplomatic manner, representing Britain and India's interests to the courts of the Amir and the Dalai Lama.[39]

The settled districts of the NWFP were the only area where Politicals assumed responsibilities similar to those of a regular member of the ICS, collecting revenue and administering justice. In the rest of the NWFP and Baluchistan, however, Politicals carried out the day to day practice of indirect rule. Political agents were either assigned to a region or a specific tribe, and were expected to manage the Government of India's relationship with that particular tribe or region. Here they were charged with dispensing allowances, keeping tribal raiding and other incursions into British India to minimum, and tamping down any signs of unrest through negotiations with the tribal *jirga*, a tribal council that served as both jury and parliament.

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bound up the Indian Ocean system in the nineteenth century (Thomas R. Metcalf, *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007)). Forms of indirect rule were utilized from the Malayan peninsula, to Natal, to Kashmir, to West Africa. The most notable exporter of the system was the former Indian Army officer, Lord Lugard who initiated a policy of indirect rule in northern Nigeria in the early twentieth century. For Lugard and indirect rule, see Frederick Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa*, 5th Edition with a forward by Margery Perham (London: Frank Cass, 1965). The best work on Lugard's system and on colonial administration in general remains Margery Perham's *Native Administration in Nigeria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937). Also see J. S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), and Colin Newbury, *Patrons, Clients and Empire: Chieftaincy and Over-rule in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). Fisher provides a good definition of indirect rule: "indirect rule is the exercise of determinative and exclusive political control by one corporate body over a nominally sovereign state, a control recognized by both sides. To be indirect rule, the control must in fact be exercised: exerted on a regular basis by the imperial power or its agent. Control must also be determining: recognized as effective from the perspectives of both the imposing power and the local Ruler subject to it. Only one corporate body at a time may hold indirect rule over a local state; all others must be excluded" (p. 6).

[39] There is no single work on the history of the British Indian legation to Kabul. Leon B. Poullada's, *Reform and Rebellion in Afghanistan, 1919-1929: King Amanullah's Failure to Modernize a Tribal Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), provides a good introduction, however. Also see W. K. Fraser-Tytler, *Afghanistan: A Study of Political Developments in Central and Southern Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967). Sir Kerr Fraser-Tytler was the Indian minister in Kabul from 1936 to 1947. His book on Afghanistan offers some interesting insights, but, alas, it is a fundamentally diplomatic book and the author gives away very little of himself or the political firmament he encountered. The experiences of the political service in Tibet are a different story, however. Here there are several memoirs by the small cadre that manned the diplomatic and consular stations in Tibet and Sikkim, including Sir Charles Bell's *Tibet: Past & Present* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1924) and Basil Gould's *The Jewel in the Lotus: Recollections of an Indian Political* (London: Chatto &Windus, 1957). The Tibet cadre of the political service has also been blessed with an excellent monograph which should serve as a model for any study of its type, Alex McKay's *Tibet and the British Raj: The Frontier Cadre, 1904-1947* (London: Curzon, 1997).

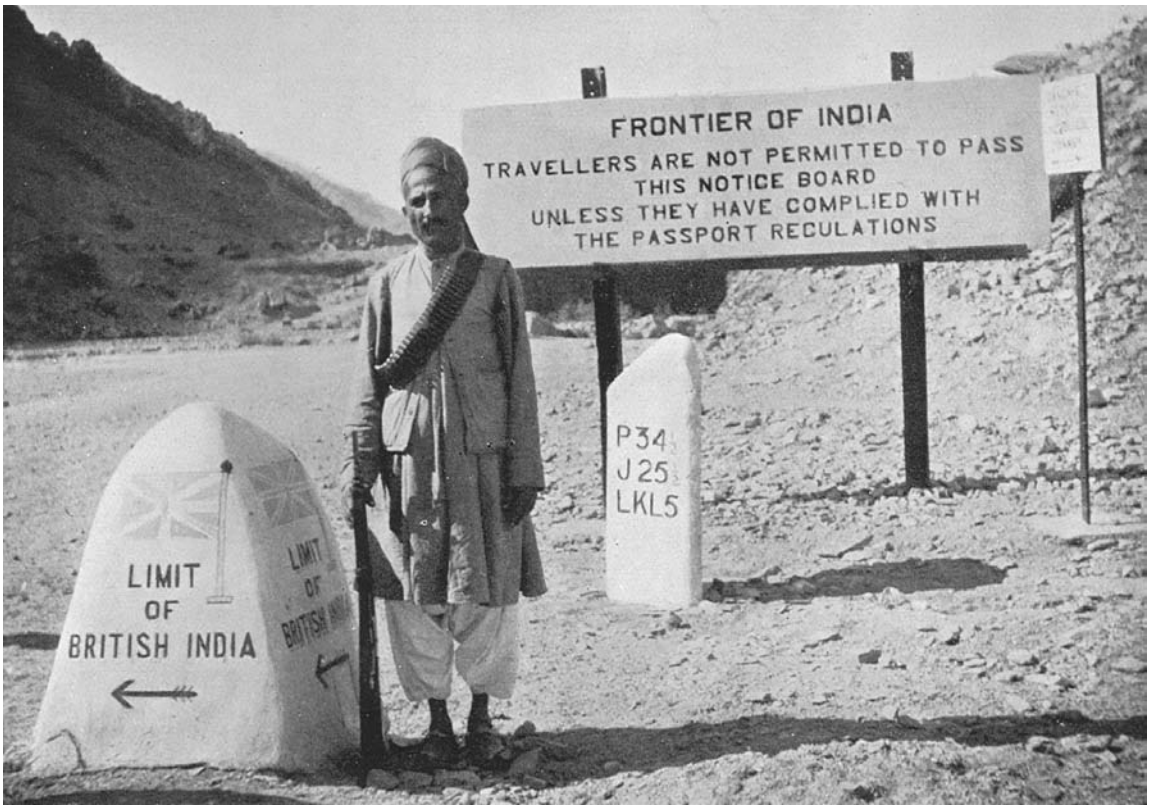

Illustration 2: The administrative border between British India and Independent Tribal Territory at the Khyber Pass, c. 1930[40]

There were no separate States' or Frontier cadres within the Indian Political Service. Over the course of a twenty or thirty year career, a Political might serve on the Frontier, in several princely states, in a Persian Gulf Emirate, at the central secretariat in Delhi or Simla, and in the British Indian legation in Kabul. Yet it is still possible to speak of a "Frontier cadre." Different types of men did better at different posts and thus tended to stay in one area of the Political Service. Expertise and mentality also encouraged retention in a specific branch of the Political Service. As the Indian Foreign Secretary, Sir Harcourt Butler, wrote in 1907: "We want lean and keen men on the Frontier, and fat and

[40] Reproduced from Rai Bahadur Diwan Chand Obhrai, *The Evolution of North-West Frontier Province: Being A Survey of the History and Constitutional Development of N.-W. F. Province in India* (Peshawar: London Book Company (India), Ltd., 1938), opp. p. 42.

good natured men in the States."[41] Those Politicals who began their careers on the Frontier, learning Pashto and coming to grips with Pathan culture, usually stayed there for the remainder of their careers. There were, however, a finite number of high ranking positions in both the NWFP and Baluchistan. Thus, a "high-flyer" in the Frontier service would often serve as Resident in one of the "first class" Princely States such as Kashmir or Mysore. An alternate path was to be "taken into" the Government of India, as a deputy Foreign Secretary, and, eventually, Foreign Secretary.

The Political Service was therefore an essential part of the British Raj's vaunted steel frame. Perhaps because its officers spent their careers involved with the most "exotic' aspects of British rule, like the states, the Frontier, or Tibet, memoirs and policy prescriptions penned by Politicals are legion. Yet little scholarly work has been done on the Political Service in the twentieth century.[42] This study attempts to shed some light on the character of this crucial service and its relationship to the nature of British imperialism in South Asia in its closing decades. In particular, it examines the solidly conservative, and even reactionary, nature of the service in the twentieth century.

This conservatism grew out of the way in which the service was recruited and in the environment in which its members worked. Long after the ICS began recruiting by competitive examination, the Political Service still operated on the basis of nomination. This meant that on the Frontier in particular, father was succeeded by son, who often carried his father's views and prejudices with him into the field. [43] Moreover, two thirds

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[41] Quoted in Sir Terence Creagh Coen, K.B.E., C.I.E., *The Indian Political Service: A Study in Indirect Rule* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1971), p. 37.

[42] The lone published scholarly study of the Indian Political Service in the twentieth century is W. Murray Hogben's article "An Imperial Dilemma: The Reluctant Indianization of the Indian Political Service," *Modern Asian Studies*, 15, 4, (1981), pp. 751-769. Ian Copland's *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) also deals with the Political Service, but the main thrust of this study is the princes themselves. Apart from this there is Creagh-Coen's *The Indian Political Service* and Charles Chenevix Trench's *Viceroy's Agent* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987). Both Creagh-Coen and Chevenix Trench were former political officers. Creagh-Coen is useful in that it offers all the basic material needed to understand the organization and structure of the service, whereas Chevenix Trench offers a very well written and entertaining combined narrative by former Politicals. Both works reveal the conservative prejudices of their authors and the service in general.

[43] One example is the Bruce family in Waziristan, where father and son, Lt.-Colonel R.I. Bruce, and Lt.-Colonel C.E. Bruce, kept up an almost pathological insistence on the need to extent Baluchistan's Sandeman system to Waziristan from the early 1890s until the Second World War. See R.I. Bruce, C.I.E., *The Forward Policy and Its Results or Thirty-Five Years' Work Amongst the Tribes on Our North-Western*

of its members were from the India Army. The officer corps of the Indian Army remained one of the most resolutely conservative groups within the British imperial firmament throughout the interwar period. The strong Army presence in the Political Service guaranteed that it would be less accommodating of political change than its sister service the ICS.[44]

The environment in which Politicals worked also contributed to their overall conservatism. As practitioners of indirect rule, they were naturally inclined to view Indian traditions as immutable. They were there to preserve and protect rather than reform the cultures they encountered. On the Frontier they oversaw the "proper" functioning of *jirgas* and *riwaj*, or tribal customary law, and took a distinctly paternalistic view of their "people." The number of military officers in the Political Service meant that "martial race" theory influenced this paternalism. On the Frontier in particular, the British believed that a Hindu from the plains lacked the requisite masculinity to deal with the "virile" Pathan tribesmen, a sentiment summed up in Kipling's "Head of the District."[45] "Natives," it was argued, lacked the all-important prestige of the European. Views like this guaranteed that unlike the ICS, which was over 50% Indian in 1947, the Political

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Frontier of India (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900); Colonel C.E. Bruce, C.S.I., C.I.E., C.B.E., O.B.E. (Late AGG Baluchistan), "The Sandeman Policy as Applied to Tribal Problems of To-Day," in the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 19, 1 (1932), pp. 45-67; Lt.-Colonel C.E. Bruce, *Waziristan, 1936-1937: The Problems of the North-West Frontiers of India and Their Solutions* (Aldershot: Gale and Polden, 1938); and C.E. Bruce, "Speech to the East India Association: The Indian Frontier Problem by Lieut.-Colonel C.E. Bruce, C.S.I., C.I.E., C.B.E.," *The Asiatic Review*, 35 (1939), pp. 492-515.

[44] In the immediate aftermath of the First World War, Gandhi's non-cooperation campaign and the introduction to the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms led to a number of resignations from the Indian Civil Service. Thereafter both recruitment and retention picked up again and stabilized for the remainder of the interwar period. For the Indian Civil Service in this period see Clive Dewey, *Anglo-Indian Attitudes: The Mind of the Indian Civil Service* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1993); Roland Hunt and John Harrison, *The District Officer in India, 1930-1947* (London: Scolar Press, 1980); David C. Potter, *India's Political Administrators, 1919-1983* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1986); Ann Ewing, "The Indian Civil Service, 1919-1924: Service Discontent and the Response in London and Delhi," *Modern Asian Studies*, 18:1 (1984), pp. 33-53; H. M. L. Alexander, "Discarding the 'Steel Frame': Changing Images Among Indian Civil Servants in the Early Twentieth Century," *South Asia*, 5:2 (1982), pp. 1-12; and T. H. Beaglehole, "From Rulers to Servants: The I.C.S. and the British Demission of Power in India," *Modern Asian Studies*, 11, 2 (1977), p. 237-255.

[45] Kipling, *Life's Handicap*, pp. 187-214. Kipling's own influence over the Frontier cadre should not be underestimated. The Frontier officer Olaf Caroe recalled that introduction to India came by way of Kipling's books (Letter from Caroe to Parshotam Mehra, 18 October 1971, Caroe Papers (IOR) F 203/79). See also Peter John Brobst, **"**The Official Mind of the Great Game: Sir Olaf Caroe, Indian Independence, and World Power, 1939-1954" (University of Texas at Austin Dissertation, 1997).

Service remained overwhelmingly European. At independence the Political Service contained 124 officers. Of these, only seventeen were Indian.[46]

THE FRONTIER, INDIA, AND IMPERIAL RETREAT

A central theme of this study is that the British viewed the Frontier as separate from the rest of India. The officers who served on the Frontier saw the region as a world apart. Caroe described it as a "sharp and cruel" land, contrasting the Frontier to the "soft" and "civilized" plains of India.[47] This conception of the Frontier arose from both the landscape, which the British believed to be both alien and familiar, and the character of the Pathan tribesmen.[48] This view of a separate Frontier is also implicitly shared by the vast majority of the scholarly work on India and the NWFP in the interwar era. In studies of Indian nationalism for example, the Frontier, which boasted one of the most vital and unique nationalist movements in all of South Asia, is mentioned little.[49] Moreover, many studies of the nationalist movement treat it in a highly localized fashion.[50]

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[46] Creagh-Coen, *The Indian Political Service*, p. 4.

[47] Quoted in Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, p. 146.

[48] Caroe described crossing the Indus as akin to "coming home." See Charles Allen, *Plain Tales from the Raj: Images of British India in the Twentieth Century* (London: Andre Deutsch, Ltd., 1975), p. 198.

[49] See, for example, John Gallagher, Gordon Johnson, and Anil Seal (eds.), *Locality, Province and Nation: Essays on Indian Politics 1870 to 1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience: The Mahatma in Indian Politics, 1928-34* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); D.A. Low (ed.), *Congress and the Raj: Facets of the Indian Struggle, 1917-47*, 2nd Edition (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004); and D.A. Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism: The Imprint of Ambiguity, 1929-1942* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[50] Stephen Alan Rittenberg's 1973 dissertation, which was published as *Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Pakhtuns: The Independence Movement in India's North-West Frontier Province* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1988), was the first major study of the Red Shirt movement. Based almost exclusively on British documents, it traced the genesis of Frontier nationalism to changing agricultural practices in the Vale of Peshawar and the growing power of large land owning Khans, who were patronized by the British at the expense of the commons and smaller landowners. Since Rittenberg's dissertation, several other works in English have been published. Amit Kumar Gupta's *North-West Frontier Province Legislature and Freedom Struggle, 1932-47* (New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research, 1976) provides a good analysis of the high politics of the period in the NWFP. As the title indicates, the author, who only used archives available in Delhi, bases most of the study on the records of the North-West Frontier legislative Assembly. Despite these constrictions it is a fascinating work. Erland Jansen's *India, Pakistan or Pakhtunistan: The Nationalist Movements in the North-West Frontier Province, 1937-47* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 1981) examines the period from the establishment of the first NWFP Congress ministry under Dr. Khan Sahib to Congress's dénouement in the lead-up to partition. Janssen agrees with Rittenberg's argument that the nationalist movement rose on the backs of the smaller landowners as they

Yet, for the British, the Frontier was a crucial part of India. Many British officials deemed the Frontier to be the most important part of the Indian Empire. This significance lay in the Frontier's intimate ties to the Raj's military establishment. Throughout the interwar years well over half the Indian Army was stationed on the North-West Frontier. The reason for this was simple. The defence of the North-West Frontier in event of tribal warfare or foreign invasion remained the Indian Army's primary responsibility. The vast majority of internal "disturbances" in India during the 1920s and 1930s were dealt with by the police rather than the Army. The Army could be called to provide "aid to civil," but its main preoccupation was the North-West Frontier, which the British believed to be the most vital land frontier in their Empire.[51]

The near constant warfare on the Frontier meant that it was also viewed as the anvil on which the future of the British Empire was forged. Curzon, who was infatuated with the region, argued that the experience of the North-West Frontier was similar to the role played by the western frontier in American history.[52] Taking Frederick Jackson Turner's thesis, Curzon saw "a corresponding discipline for the men of our stock on the outskirts of Empire." The North-West Frontier offered "an ennobling and invigorating stimulus for our youth, saving them alike from the corroding ease and morbid excitements of western civilization."[53] Rather than fading away in the interwar period, Curzon's views about the centrality of the Frontier to British imperialism were reinforced

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challenged the large Khans in the 1920s. Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah's *Ethnicity, Islam, and Nationalism: Muslim Politics in the North-West Frontier Movement, 1937-47* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999) draws upon an impressive array of archival material in this study of the growth of Muslim communal politics and the rise of the Muslim League within the same period covered by Jansen. Though critical of Rittenberg's reliance on Frederick Barth's anthropological work on the Pathans and giving greater credit to religious leadership, Shah does not dissent from Rittenberg's fundamental assertions about the foundations of Frontier nationalism in the settled districts. Mukulika Banerjee's *The Pathan Unarmed* is essentially an anthropological study based on interviews the author carried out with former nationalists in the 1990s. In this sympathetic but effective work, Banerjee emphasizes the importance of social reformation and Gandhian principles within the nationalist movement. Banerjee's study, along with D. G. Tendukar's exceptional biography on the nationalist leader, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan: Faith is a Battle* (Bombay: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1967), do the best job in showing the clear and important links between the Red Shirts and the All-Indian nationalist movement.

[51] See Chapters Two and Six.

[52] For the famous "Turner Thesis," see Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1920).

[53] Lord Curzon of Kedleston, *Frontiers: Delivered in the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford, November 2, 1907*, 2nd Edition (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1908).

as many British officials fell back on Edwardian and even Victorian tropes amidst the upheavals on Indian nationalism.[54] Subsequent Commanders-in-Chief of the Indian Army agreed with Curzon.[55] The last one, Field Marshal Sir Claude Auchinleck, believed that the countless skirmishes on the North-West Frontier made it the finest military training ground in the British Empire.[56]

Moreover, Frontier defence provided the British with a rationale for maintaining a massive military establishment in India. Scholars have argued that nineteenth century India comprised a garrison state.[57] This argument holds true in the twentieth. In the early 1920s defence formed a shocking 59% of the Government of India's central expenditure.[58] Although this cost was lowered to some extent by the Army Reforms of 1922, the Indian Army remained the biggest drain on the Indian exchequer throughout the interwar period. Control over the Indian Army ultimately meant control of India, and it was one of the few issues on which the British refused to compromise during the constitutional wrangling of the interwar years. Furthermore, the Indian Army not only

[54] The refurbishment in the 1920s and 1930s of old British myths about India is crucial for understanding the nature of British imperialism in the subcontinent in this era (see Pillarisetti Sudhir, **"**Radicals, Reactionaries, and the Retreat of the Raj: A Look at British Attitudes to Indian Nationalism in the Inter-War Period" (Presentation made to the British Studies Seminar, The University of Texas at Austin, April 18, 2008). Sleeman's mid-nineteenth century work on *Thuggee* was reincarnated in the works of popular writers such as Catherine Mayo and Lt.-General George Fletcher MacMunn. In a wider sense Hollywood also resuscitated Victorian ideas about Indian loyalty, underhandedness, and the glamour of the North-West Frontier in movies such as *Gunga Din*, *The Drum*, and *Lives of the Bengal Lancers* in the 1930s (see Katherine Mayo, *Mother India* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1927) Lt.-General Sir George Fletcher MacMunn, *The Underworld of India* (London: Jarrolds, 1933).

[55] See Chapters Six and Seven.

[56] Allen, *Plain Tales from the Raj*, p. 197.

[57] This argument is made by Douglas Peers in *Between Mars and Mammon: Colonial Armies and the Garrison State in Early Nineteenth Century India* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995). For the history of the British Indian Army in the twentieth century the best single volume remains Stephen P. Cohen's *The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991). Also see Partha Sarathi Gupta and Anirudh Deshpande (eds.), *The British Raj and its Indian Armed Forces, 1857-1939* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002); Anirudh Deshpande, *British Military Policy in India, 1900-1945: Colonial Constraints and Declining Power* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2005); David Omissi's *The Sepoy and the Raj: The Indian Army, 1860-1940* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994); and Pradeep P. Barua, *Gentlemen of the Raj: The Indian Army Officer Corps, 1817-1949* (Westport: Praeger, 2003).

[58] See Chapter One. During the Great War the Indian Army had grown to over 1 million men, but by the 1930s it had decreased to 150,000 Indian troops, 60,000 British troops and 34,000 Indian reservists. The Army expanded again, to over 200,000, on the eve of the Second World War. It was during this conflict that the role of the Indian Army as the emergency sword arm of the British Empire became apparent once again, as it grew to over 2.5 million men.

provided a massive armed force on which the British could fall back on in India; it was also a cornerstone of Britain's imperium in the East, serving as an imperial "fire brigade" throughout the Indian Ocean and the Far East.[59]

The North-West Frontier – the ramparts of the British Empire in South Asia in more ways than one – was a bastion of the conservative militaristic and paternalistic side of the Indian Empire. The region was inhabited by a people who reinforced the contradictory yet complementary ideologies of sameness and difference that characterized British thought in the subcontinent. The NWFP was administered by a cadre of officials noted for both their conservatism and their deep paternalism. It was also the centerpiece of the Indian Empire's vast military establishment. Here, the British believed, was the first line of defence against both internal and external enemies. The Frontier not only provided "a bit of action" for countless officers, it also provided the justification for continued British control of the Indian Army, which was a central pillar of the British Empire in the East.

In the immediate aftermath of the First World War, the British, both in Delhi and in London, continued to act as if the Frontier was a place apart. In an era of reform and imperial accommodation, the authorities imposed long-term military occupation on large swathes of the Frontier and excluded the NWFP from the wide-ranging Montagu-Chelmsford reforms introduced throughout the rest of British India. Yet by 1939 everything had changed. In the settled districts of the NWFP the Chief Commissioner was now a Governor presiding over a powerful Congress ministry. In the tribal belt, the forward policy of the early 1920s was deemed a failure and British freedom of movement when it came to a new policy towards the tribesmen was, by its own admission, increasingly restricted. Moreover, the NWFP and its Pathan population, which was all but ignored by nationalists in the early 1920s, was now a fully integrated part of "political India."

[59] Robinson and Gallagher argued that the defence of the routes to India, and with it the Indian Army, was a primary cause of the late nineteenth century "scramble for Africa." Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher with Alice Denny, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1961).

Map 1: The North-West Frontier Province[60]

[60] Reproduced from All India Congress Committee, *Report on North-West Frontier Province and Bannu Raids, 1938* (New Delhi: The Hindustan Times Press, 1938).

CHAPTER ONE:
THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER AND THE CRISIS OF EMPIRE, 1919-1923

In the wake of the First World War the British Empire stood at its greatest territorial extent. The Empire emerged from its four year struggle with the Central Powers not only intact but enlarged. In Africa, the seizure of German East Africa completed Cecil Rhodes' dream of a continent painted red from Cairo to Cape Town. In the Middle East, Cromer's "veiled protectorate" over Egypt was superseded by outright rule. Jerusalem and Baghdad, along with Nineveh and Tyre, lay at the victors' feet. In the far-off Pacific, New Zealand's occupation of German Samoa meant that, quite literally, the sun never set on the British Empire.

Unfortunately for the British, this territorial sweep failed to translate into actual strength, and was in fact indicative of imperial overreach and weakness. As John Gallagher noted, once the Empire reached this extent, "the sun never set upon its problems."[1] In the aftermath of war, Britain was financially weakened, pressed for manpower it could not spare, and confronted by an international order transformed by Bolshevism and Woodrow Wilson's vision of "self-determination."[2] This weakened imperial structure was further shaken by nationalist revolts in Ireland, Egypt, India and Iraq between 1919 and 1922. Crisis stalked the Empire.

The British Empire survived these years of upheaval, but it did so by accommodating the new realities that confronted it.[3] Flexibility was the order of the day,

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[1] John Gallagher, "Nationalisms and the Crisis of Empire, 1919-1922", *Modern Asian Studies*, 15, 3 (1981), p. 355.

[2] See Keith Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire, 1918-22* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984). For an excellent work on the impact of the rhetoric of self-determination on the colonial world in this period see Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Colonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[3] John Gallagher's posthumously published *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire: The Ford Lectures and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) provides an excellent analysis of Britain's revitalization of Empire in the interwar period which contrasts with A.P. Thornton's characterization of these years as a crucial step in the collapse of British imperialism in his *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies: A Study in British Power* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1959). John Darwin agrees with Gallagher's appraisal of imperial resurgence in "Imperialism in Decline?: Tendencies in British Imperial Policy Between the Wars", *The Historical Journal*, 23, 3 (1980), pp. 657-679.

as the political, economic and even ideological foundations of British imperialism were reviewed and reformed. Southern Ireland and Egypt received independence.[4] The administration in Iraq was drastically overhauled and the Hashemite Arab Emir Feisal placed on the throne.[5] Elsewhere in the Middle East, the British were forced to make new arrangements with a resurgent Persia and Turkey that seriously curtailed the eastern dreams of the Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon.[6] In India, the linchpin of Britain's world system, reforms were enacted and agreements concluded that gave greater control to both the Government of India and to the Indian electorate.[7]

In the midst of these events, the Third Anglo-Afghan War broke out in May 1919. The war sparked a nearly three-year conflagration among the Pathan tribes living in Waziristan along the unadministered Indo-Afghan Frontier. British attempts to suppress the revolt nearly bankrupted the Government of India and led to calls for an entirely new approach to the North-West Frontier and the troubled Waziristan region. The debate that ensued exhibited a great deal of flexibility commensurate with wide-ranging changes that were taking place throughout the Empire. Yet, in the end, the argument that carried the day, after being insisted upon by London, was one of military occupation at great expense to the Indian exchequer.

This chapter examines the British response to this crisis, and why a "forward policy" of military occupation in Waziristan prevailed. It argues that although the Indian authorities, faced with a host of new political and economic constraints, were able to exercise a large degree of independence in this era, the British, and the Indian officer

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[4] For Ireland see David Harkness, *The Restless Dominion: The Irish Free State and the British Commonwealth of Nations, 1921-31* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1969). For Egypt see John Darwin, *Britain, Egypt, and the Middle East: Imperial Policy in the Aftermath of War, 1918-1922* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1981).

[5] See Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country, 1914-1932* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007) and Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

[6] See G. H. Bennett, *British Foreign Policy During the Curzon Period, 1919-24* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995) and Darwin, *Britain, Egypt and the Middle East*.

[7] See P.G. Robb, *The Government of India and Reform: Policies Towards Politics and the Constitution, 1916-1921* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), John Gallagher and Anil Seal, "Britain and India Between the Wars," *Modern Asian Studies*, 15, 3 (1981), pp. 387-414, and Judith M. Brown, "Imperial Façade: Some Constraints Upon and Contradictions in the British Position in India, 1919-35," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 26, 5 (1976), pp. 35-52.

corps in particular, believed that the Frontier should be the exception to this trend.[8] This stemmed in large part from the widely held belief that this region was the one place in India where they could suffer a "knock-out blow."[9]

Although the Army leadership was willing to make large cuts in the size of the military, the Frontier and Waziristan were sacrosanct. Seeing the Waziristan revolt as an opportunity to take control of the region, the Army used its considerable clout within both the Government of India and the India Office to win the day, despite the financial damage this policy would wreak on India. The new policy in Waziristan thus represented a counter to the general trend towards devolution of power in the post-war period and illustrates both the central standing of the Frontier within the British Empire and the continued influence and power of India's officer corps well into the twentieth century.

THE FRONTIER PROBLEM AND WAZIRISTAN

Of all the Frontier tribes, the British considered two of the principal groups in Waziristan, the Mahsuds and the Wazirs, to be "Pathans among Pathans." If the British experience on the North-West Frontier in general could be characterized as "an imperial migraine" then Waziristan was its pulsing epicenter.[10] Although other areas of the Frontier, such as the Khyber, were of greater strategic significance, Waziristan produced a disproportionate number of raids into the administered districts, and the Wazirs and the Mahsuds had remained fiercely independent.[11] In his history of the Government's dealings with the Mahsuds, the onetime Resident in Waziristan, Sir Evelyn Howell,

[8] India, for instance, fended off the recommendations of the British Government's Esher Committee, which called on India to garrison and pay for Britain's Empire East of Suez, cut the size of the Indian Army and concluded a new tariff convention with Britain (Judith M. Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 248).

[9] Lt.-Colonel C.E. Bruce, "Memorandum" in *Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform [Session 1932-33], Volume 2C: Minutes of Evidence* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1934), p. 1689, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML).

[10] See Charles Miller, *Khyber: British India's North West Frontier, The Story of an Imperial Migraine* (New York: Macmillan, 1977).

[11] For a discussion of the strategic passes in Central and South Asia see Mahnaz Z. Ispahani's *Roads and Rivals: The Political Uses of Access in the Borderlands of Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).

observed that if a "civilization has no other end than to produce a fine type of man," then that of the Mahsuds must "surpass all others."[12] The British believed that while Islam and Kabul played a role in the Mahsuds' perceived intransigence, the main motivator was an "instinct" for independence. This independence, though admirable, proved problematic. Waziristan remained the most troublesome spot in what, for the British at least, was a very troubled region of their Empire.

There had been violent debates over the correct policy towards Waziristan since the 1860s, divided into what became known as the "forward" and "close border" schools. One Frontier officer observed that "by temperament or by profession a man belongs to the Forward or Backward School just as the man in the street may adopt a University on Boat Race Day."[13] The two schools were "big tent" groupings and precise definitions are therefore difficult, but the essentials were as follows. The forward school was historically linked to those who took an aggressive stance towards Afghanistan and Russia. They advocated some sort of occupation of the tribal areas. The forward school emphasized the importance of military action and, using the analogy of the Scottish Highlands, the construction of roads.[14] Their ultimate goal was the "civilization" of the tribes. Many within this school maintained that the solution lay in the use of tribal *maliks* – headmen – who, with enough encouragement and allowance, would stand as the appropriate interlocutors between the Government and tribesmen. This policy had succeeded in Baluchistan and, if given a chance, they argued, it would work in Waziristan.[15]

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[12] E.B. Howell, *Mizh: A Monograph of Government's Relations with the Mahsud Tribe* (Simla: Government of India Press, 1931), p. xii. Many of Howell's fellow Frontier officers, including Caroe, believed Howell's monograph, *Mizh*, to be "the most penetrating of all tribal studies" (Sir Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans, 550B.C.-A.D.1957* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1958), p. 395).

[13] Memorandum by Sir John Maffey: Unsolicited Views on an Unsolved Problem, 2 August 1922, Hailey Papers, India Office Records (IOR), E220/3c.

[14] Note by Col. C.H. Hasell (Chief Engineer, Waziristan) to the Indian Statutory Commission, 4 April 1928, Simon Papers (IOR) F77/47.

[15] The forward policy was often associated with Baluchistan's "Sandeman Policy," named after its progenitor, Sir Robert Sandeman (1835-1892). Sandeman, while serving as Resident in Baluchistan during the 1870s, introduced a policy of tribal "control" based on allowances, the use of tribal chiefs to enforce control and the use of force when necessary (See Henry Thomas Thornton, *Colonel Sir Robert Sandeman: His Life and Work on Our Indian Frontier, A Memoir, with Selections from His Correspondence and Official Writings* (London: John Murray, 1895). The system was successful and Sandeman's many disciples sought to expand the system to other areas. Sir Henry Dobbs, who served throughout the Frontier, Baluchistan, and Afghanistan, created a version of it in Iraq in the 1920s (See Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*).

The close border school had historical connections to those who advocated minimal British interference on the western banks of the Indus.[16] They held that the Waziristan tribes were too inherently democratic to embrace the *malik* system,[17] and any attempt to bring the Mahsud and Wazirs under British control would only worsen matters and spark a tribal uprising. Although the close border school did not oppose military intervention, as a rule they preferred what their detractors referred to as "masterly inactivity." Importantly, this approach gave little weight to the forward school's emphasis on a civilizing mission.[18]

In 1919 a modified version of the close border policy held sway. A half-hearted forward policy premised on retaliatory strikes, or "burn and scuttle," had reigned supreme in the 1890s, but when Lord Curzon assumed the viceroyalty he blamed the forward policy for the major tribal uprisings of 1897-98. In 1901 he instituted a revised close border policy.[19] The Viceroy simultaneously detached the Frontier from the Punjab, creating the NWFP that was itself divided between "settled districts" and unadministered tribal "agencies."[20] Curzon's new Frontier policy was not a complete victory for partisans of the close border school, however; tribal allowances remained. Moreover, Curzon realized that the tribes' relationships with their brethren in the settled districts and the

[16] In the 1860s the Close Borderites were associated with the Frontier policies of the then Viceroy, Sir John Lawrence, who advocated a policy of British withdrawal to the Indus River, as a more manageable boundary and the best place to make a possible stand against the Russians (See Miller, *Khyber*, p. 121).

[17] In the 1890s, the Commissioner for Derajat, R.I. Bruce, attempted to bring the Sandeman system to Waziristan. Bruce essentially created *maliks* among the tribes. The system never took hold, however, and these *malik*s were unable to exercise control over their tribal sections. It is likely that the policy failed because the Government, faced with mounting debts during the period, failed to provide any real assistance (See R.I. Bruce, C.I.E., *The Forward Policy and Its Results or Thirty-Five Years' Work Amongst the Tribes on our North-Western Frontier of India* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900) and Caroe, *The Pathans*, p. 399).

[18] C.E. Bruce, "Speech to the East India Association: The Indian Frontier Problem by Lieut.-Colonel C.E. Bruce, C.S.I., C.I.E., C.B.E.", *The Asiatic Review*, 35 (1939), p. 492.

[19] Curzon's view that the major tribal "disturbances" of 1897-98 were the offspring of administrative failure and the needless incitement of the tribes is shared by the historian (and former Frontier officer) C.C. Davies, whose *The Problem of the North-West Frontier 1890-1908: With a Survey of Policy since 1849* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), remains the best study of the Frontier at the turn of the last century.

[20] There were five tribal agencies: Khyber, Kurram, Malakand, Tochi (Waziristan), and Wana (Waziristan).

threat marauding tribal *lashkars*[21] presented to nearby towns and villages precluded a total withdrawal of law and order from the tribal tracts. He thus inaugurated a corps of tribal militias led by British officers.[22] It was this system that fell apart in the summer of 1919.

The NWFP remained relatively quiet during the First World War, but in May 1919 the Frontier problem emerged once again when the tennis-playing and charismatic young Amir of Afghanistan, Amanullah, provoked the Third Anglo-Afghan War.[23] Ascending to the throne after his father's murder in February 1919, the new Amir was a modernizer and fervent nationalist. He immediately sought to persuade the British to relinquish their control over Kabul's foreign policy, thus assuring the kingdom full independence.[24] Failing to convince them, Amanullah used the plight of India's Muslims and the recent Jallianwalah Bagh massacre at Amritsar as his *casus belli*.[25] On May 3rd, a group of Afghan regulars seized a strip of land in the Khyber Pass. On May 6th, after Amanullah failed to reply to an ultimatum sent by the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, the extended skirmish known as the Third-Anglo Afghan War officially commenced.[26]

Although many of its best regiments were still overseas, the Indian Army stationed along the Frontier remained a formidable opponent. Amanullah therefore used every possible weapon at his disposal. He made tentative moves towards the Bolshevik

[21] "War Party."

[22] General Staff Memorandum on North-West Frontier Policy, 1 November 1920, India Office Records (IOR) L PO 4/4.

[23] Roland Wild, *Amanullah: Ex-King of Afghanistan* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1932), p. 16.

[24] Translation of a Letter from Amir Amanulla Khan, Amir of Afghanistan and its Dependencies to His Excellency the Viceroy, 3 March 1919, TNA FO 371/3990. On Amanullah's reign see Leon B. Poullada, *Reform and Rebellion in Afghanistan, 1919-1929: King Amanullah's Failure to Modernize a Tribal Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973) and Rhea Talley Stewart, *Fire in Afghanistan, 1914-1929: Faith, Hope and the British Empire* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1973).

[25] Abdul Ali Arghandawi, *British Imperialism and Afghanistan's Struggle for Independence, 1914-1921* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1989), p. 176.

[26] Government of India, *The Third Afghan War: Official Account Compiled in the General Staff Branch, Army Headquarters, India* (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1926), pp. 14-15. The First Anglo-Afghan War (1839-1842) and Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1881) were both large scale affairs that involved British invasions of Afghanistan and occupations of major Afghan cities like Kandahar and Kabul. The massacre that accompanied General Elphinstone's retreat from Kabul during the first war is widely considered one of the greatest disasters in British military history.

leaders in Russia – "coquetting with Bolshevism," as the British put it.[27] More importantly, his pronouncements and declarations were laden with Islamic rhetoric aimed at the trans-border tribes. These tribes, rather than the regular Afghan army, constituted Amanullah's main weapon against the British.

The British were fortunate in the northern theatre around the Khyber Pass [**see Map 1**]. Although the Afridi troops enlisted in the Khyber Rifles shot their British officers and went over to the Afghans, their kinsmen remained neutral throughout the spring.[28] In the south, Waziristan was a different story. On May 23rd, Afghan troops, accompanied by tribal irregulars, began marching towards northern Waziristan.[29] The British evacuated their small posts in northern Waziristan as these combined forces advanced. In retrospect, these evacuations were a mistake. Interpreting these withdrawals as a general retreat, the local Mahsud and Wazir tribesmen deserted their militias en masse and, after ejecting their officers, joined the Afghans. A relief force, commanded by Reginald Dyer, fresh from ordering the Amritsar massacre, was sent to northern Waziristan and a truce with the Afghans was concluded on June 3rd.[30] The damage was done, however. The tribes of Waziristan were in revolt.

Meanwhile, the formal war between British and Afghanistan was rapidly drawing to a close. The regular Afghan forces were routed and the Amir sued for peace. The Third Anglo-Afghan War officially ended on August 8th when a treaty between Amanullah's representatives and the Indian Foreign Secretary, Sir Hamilton Grant, was signed at Rawalpindi. Some aspects of the treaty were expected. It prohibited the movement of war materiel to Afghanistan, ended the Amir's subsidy, provided for a new friendship treaty after a period of six months, and arranged for a British commission to carry out a new demarcation of the international border in the Khyber.[31] These articles were accompanied

[27] Notes on Bolshevik Situation, 17 September 1919, (IOR) L P&S 10/886.
[28] Arghandawi, *British Imperialism*, p. 202.
[29] *The Third Afghan War, Official Account*, p. 54.
[30] Lt.-General G.N. Molesworth, *Afghanistan 1919: An Account of Operations in the Third Afghan War* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1962), pp. 120-122.
[31] Treaty of Peace Between the Illustrious British Government and the Independent Afghan Government, 8 August 1919, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA) FO 371/3990.

by a surprise, however. Grant attached a diplomatic note to the Treaty promising Amanullah complete control over Afghan foreign policy and thus full independence.[32]

Grant believed that Britain's control over Afghanistan's foreign policy was in fact a sham and needed to end. He was right; the free reign given to German and Turkish agents in Afghanistan during the Great War revealed the real limits of Britain's management of Kabul's foreign policy. To London's chagrin, Grant decided to end this charade.[33] The Government of India, however, was keen to end the conflict as soon as possible and supported Grant's move. India's internal situation was getting worse every day. With Gandhi's non-cooperation movement growing, food prices skyrocketing, and bankruptcy looming, Delhi believed there was nothing to lose and everything to gain by ending hostilities with a promise of full independence. In this way, the Third Afghan War mirrored the general British response to the other crises that shook the Empire in this period – they exhibited flexibility and made concessions in order to regroup in a stronger position.

A NEW APROACH TO WAZIRISTAN?

The war with Afghanistan was over. But as the eminent Frontier officer, Sir Evelyn Howell, observed in 1930: "Unlike other wars, Afghan wars become serious only when they are over."[34] Encouraged by Amanullah's lieutenants, and believing that the British intended to retire beyond the Indus, the Mahsuds and Wazirs continued to raid the administered districts of the Frontier. Curzon's militia system had failed miserably.[35] As the Mahsud raids into Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan persisted into the autumn it was clear to the British that a new approach was necessary.

The Indian General Staff fired the opening salvo in this latest incarnation of the Frontier debate in June 1919. With the Afghan War settling down, the role that Kabul

[32] Letter from Sir Hamilton Grant to Chief Afghan Representative, 8 August 1919, FO 371/3990.
[33] Arghandawi, *British Imperialism*, p. 212.
[34] Howell, *Mizh*, p. 80.
[35] L. F. Rushbrook Williams, *India in 1919: A Report Prepared for Presentation to Parliament in Accordance with the Requirements of the Government of India Act (5 & 6 Geo. V., Chap. 61)* (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1920), p. 17.

played as *agent provocateur* in Waziristan seemed the most pressing need. The military argued that the centerpiece of any new policy in Waziristan must lie with Afghanistan. The Indian Commander-in-Chief, Sir Charles Monro, insisted that the Indian authorities could no longer "remain with blind-folded eyes on our side of the Frontier."[36] To this end, the Chief of the Indian General Staff, Sir George Kirkpatrick, recommended major border changes, including the seizure of the "Khost salient," which jutted into northern Waziristan.[37] Kirkpatrick argued that the "trans-border" element of the Frontier problem would be fixed if the tribes in question ceased to be "trans-border" and were instead entirely contained on the British side of the international boundary, seemingly forgetting the fact that any annexation would place the British in the midst of yet more "fanatical and hostile" tribesmen, when they could scarcely control their own. In a sign of the times, officials in the India Office noted that despite the fact that seizure was "entirely justified," grabbing territory from Afghanistan would be inconsistent with the spirit of "self determination."[38]

Apart from the unrealistic attempt at territorial realignment, the General Staff focused on two other major issues as well over the stiflingly hot summer of 1919.[39] The first was the problem of communication. Kirkpatrick wrote that the disadvantages of the "bad and limited roads through tribal territory" had made it almost impossible to hold "vital portions of the frontier." The solution, he argued, lay in the construction of lateral roads through the heart of Mahsud territory. The second point on which the General Staff focused was the failure of Curzon's militia system. The militias worked well enough in peacetime, but, in an emergency they were neither strong nor efficient enough to operate without regular troops. The General Staff argued that the militias should be replaced by a full-scale military occupation with regular troops. With the help of a road system,

[36] Note to the India Office by General Charles Monro (Commander-in-Chief, India), 17 June 1919, (IOR) L MIL 7/6645.

[37] Memorandum on the Strategical Considerations Affecting the Alignment of the North-West Frontier of India by Lt.-General G.M. Kirkpatrick (Chief of the Indian General Staff), 11 June 1919, L MIL 7/6645.

[38] Memorandum by General Sir Edmund Barrow (Military Secretary to the India Office), 26 July 1919, L MIL 7/6645. This became a moot point following the terms of the Rawalpindi Treaty signed in August.

[39] The high temperatures on the Frontier were a major impediment to British and Indian forces. By June, temperatures in the shade rose to 127° Fahrenheit (Molesworth, *Afghanistan,* p. 81).

military occupation would lead to the gradual extension of "civil administration over tribal tracts until it reaches the Afghan border."[40]

With these two objects – road construction and military occupation – in mind, the Indian Army began major operations against the rebellious tribal sections in the autumn of 1919. As Viceroy, Curzon had written in 1899 that "no patchwork scheme – and all our present recent schemes: blockade, allowances, etc., are mere patchwork – will settle the Waziristan problem…not until the military steam roller has passed over the country from end to end, will there be peace." Curzon noted that given the cost in men and treasure of such an endeavor, he had no desire to put that machine in motion.[41] In 1919 the Army felt no such compunction. The Government of India had granted the Army complete control over the region. Wazir and Mahsud *jirgas* called at the end of the year were informed that the British were there to stay.

Fighting in Waziristan continued through the winter and spring, with the bulk of operations ending on May 7th.[42] In the summer of 1920, however, the Wana Wazirs embarked on a series of raids into British territory, and campaigning in Waziristan resumed.[43] The tribesmen could not be pacified under the current system. Moreover, this anarchy, the Army argued, could open the floodgates to Bolshevik propaganda, weapons, and perhaps even invasion.[44] The Army leadership now believed that they needed to

[40] Memorandum of the Strategical Considerations Affecting the Alignment of the North-West Frontier of India.

[41] Quoted in Howell, *Mizh*, p. 36.

[42] L. F. Rushbrook Williams, *India in 1920: A Report Prepared for Presentation to Parliament in Accordance with the Requirements of the Government of India Act (5 & 6 Geo. V., Chap. 61)* (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1921), p. 8.

[43] See Government of India, *Operations in Waziristan, 1919-1920: Compiled by the General Staff, Army Headquarters, India* (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1921) and Government of India, *N.W. Frontier of India, 1920-35: Official History of Operations, Parts I, II and III* (New Delhi: Government of India Press, 1945). The fighting in Waziristan convinced the Indian Army that in future they would have to modernize their forces and increase their training for mountain warfare. For details see T.R. Moreman, *The Army in India and the Development of Frontier Warfare, 1849-1947* (London: Macmillan, 1998), Chapter Four.

[44] The Soviet overthrow of the Amir of Bokhara in 1920 alarmed both the Indian Commander-in-Chief and the General Staff. Though they doubted that the Soviets were organized enough to mount an invasion of India or even Afghanistan, they were convinced that the Soviets would lean on Amanullah to allow them to send Bolshevik agents into the tribal areas. The Commander-in-Chief argued that the Soviet government considered the British Empire its "primary enemy," and that it was extremely unlikely that such a

convince the Government of India to pursue a long-term forward policy. To do this, they launched a frontal assault on Curzon, then serving as Britain's Foreign Secretary. The fundamental problem with Curzon's policy in Waziristan, they asserted, was that he had failed to understand the "Pathan character" and "human nature" in general. Although the Pathan did well when directed by a strong, resolute Englishman, the General Staff maintained that it was foolish to gamble on the Pathan's loyalty, especially when religion was involved. The General Staff asked the rhetorical question: could the "influence of a quasi-military discipline and an ever increasing loyalty to the British Government" be expected to withstand the chance for blood and loot or the call of the Mullah?[45]

Arguments about character and instinct dominated the Army's position. This is unsurprising, as the Indian Army officer corps constituted one of the most conservative and backward-looking constituencies in British India. As late as 1929, Kirkpatrick's successor as Chief of the Indian General Staff, Sir Claud Jacob, made the astonishing assertion that "the moment an Indian becomes literate he becomes effeminate."[46] Yet paradoxically, the General Staff also emphasized an apparent mutability in the Pathan character, arguing that the chief problem in Waziristan was *poverty*. They remarked that "the hills breed many and feed few."[47] Occupation would allow road construction and other employment opportunities that would bring "wealth into the country, removing what is after all the chief cause of lawlessness and crime – poverty."[48]

"government as the present one in Russia can hope to retain its power unless by the agency of foreign aggression (Minute by His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, 1 November 1920, L PO 4/4).

[45] General Staff Memorandum on North-West Frontier Policy, 1 November 1920.

[46] Field Marshal Sir Claud Jacob, Testimony to the Indian Statutory Commission, 20 June 1929, Simon Papers (IOR) F77/56. The Officer Corps was particularly opposed to the process of "Indianization" whereby Indians received full "King's Commissions" in the Army. See for example, Pradeep P. Barua, *Gentlemen of the Raj: The Indian Army Officer Corps, 1817-1949* (Westport: Praeger, 2003), Chapter Four.

[47] This phrase was a reference to Edward Oliver's *Across the Border: Or Pathan and Biloch* (London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1890).

[48] General Staff Memorandum on North-West Frontier Policy, 1 November 1920. Recruitment into the regular army, the usual employment path open to so-called "martial races" in British India was closed to the trans-border tribes at this point. Mahsud enlistment was expanded in 1910, but despite the fact that one Mahsud won the Victoria Cross on the Western Front, the majority of recruits either refused to reply to the call up or deserted en masse. Howell reported that when "deploring the loss to their countrymen of military service Mahsuds not uncommonly sum up the discussion with the remark '*Mizh ser beitabora khalq vi*'" [we are very untrustworthy people] (Howell, *Mizh*, p. 67).

This emphasis on the possibility of change and "civilizing" the Mahsuds and Wazirs was echoed elsewhere. The former Chief Commissioner of the NWFP, Sir George Roos-Keppel, a legendary figure on the Frontier and previously a firm adherent of Curzon's policy of non-interference, made a dramatic *volte-face* in favor of a new policy. In a memorandum to the India Office, Roos-Keppel wrote: "The only policy on the frontier which can give permanently satisfactory results is for Government to realize their responsibilities towards…the independent tribesmen who fell to our lot in the Durand Agreement." He based his argument on what he saw as Afghan precedent, arguing (without foundation) that beginning in the 1890s the Amir had "inaugurated a series of campaigns" against his tribes, and, after years of struggle, pacified his tribal population. On the British side, Roos-Keppel cited lack of continuity, maintaining that the only permanent result of the prevailing policy was "a legacy of hatred." Therefore, the Indian authorities should lay down a policy of "civilizing the frontier tribes up to the Durand Line, first by crushing their fighting power and disarming them, and then by making roads throughout their country."[49] The "military steam roller" must be applied – but as an agent of "civilization."

This sounded increasingly attractive. Since the outbreak of hostilities in 1919 no fewer than 611 raids into the settled districts had occurred, resulting in 298 British subjects being killed, 392 wounded, and 463 kidnapped and over Rs. 30 lakhs (£220,000) looted.[50] Statistics like these, along with the ongoing fighting in Waziristan, convinced the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, that the Army was right. Although Chelmsford privately stressed the need for "opportunism" in Waziristan rather than a dogmatic policy, he was firmly convinced of the need for military occupation.[51] In August 1920 Chelmsford declared that "this continual and gratuitous provocation" could no longer be suffered. The Army would permanently occupy Waziristan. Also using the language of "civilization," the Viceroy noted that this was for the tribesmen's own good:

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[49] General Staff Memorandum on North-West Frontier Policy, 1 November 1920.

[50] *India in 1920*, p. 11. A Lakh is 100,000. The average exchange rate between the rupee and sterling in this period was roughly £1=Rs. 15/-.

[51] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 21 December 1920, L PO 4/4.

> We hope that the peace which must eventually attend our domination of these tribesmen will bring its usual blessings in its train; that they may be weaned from their life of rapine and violence and may find both in material improvements in their country, such as the extension of irrigation and cultivation, and in the civilizing intercourse with India, a more stable prosperity than they have ever derived from their traditional profession of robbers and marauders.[52]

An all-out military occupation could provide security for the settled districts and economic development for the Mahsuds and Wazirs. The way now seemed open for a full forward policy on the Frontier.

THE FINANCIAL CRISIS AND THE VICEROY'S COUNCIL

There remained the question of how the Government of India planned to carry out such a large-scale project. In the wake of the First World War, the Indian Army was stretched to its limits. Four divisions and two cavalry brigades remained in Egypt while Mesopotamia retained two divisions, two cavalry brigades, and seventeen line-of-communication brigades. The situation worsened in the summer of 1920 following the outbreak of a revolt in Mesopotamia.[53] Moreover, the Indian Government faced financial ruin. The recently enacted Montagu-Chelmsford reforms devolved a number of powers to the provinces, and with this, large parts of the budget. The reforms also mandated budget votes by the Central Legislative Assembly, now shorn of its official majority. The Viceroy could override the Legislature on specific budget items, but this was to be avoided at all costs lest it arouse further opposition from Indian nationalists. On top of this 1920 saw a slump in international trade and a fall in the exchange rate between the rupee and sterling[54] that destroyed the best-laid plans of the India's administrators.[55] In

[52] Quoted in *India in 1920*, pp. 10-11.

[53] Mark Jacobsen (ed.), *Rawlinson in India* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2002), p. xxiii.

[54] Between September and December 1920 the rupee fell from 1*s.* 10*d* to 1*s.* 5¾*d* (*India in 1920*, p. 81).

[55] The best study of Indian finances and its relationship to Britain and the imperial system in this period remains B.R. Tomlinson's *The Political Economy of the Raj, 1914-1947: The Economics of Decolonization in India* (London, Macmillan, 1979).

1919-20 the Government ran a deficit of Rs. 23 crores or £15,333,333.[56] It was likely to get worse in 1921.[57]

Throughout this fiscal crisis, defence formed 59% of central expenditure. Combining all civil expenditure, central and provincial, defence accounted for a staggering 35% of spending.[58] Since most of the deficit stemmed from the aftermath of the Afghan War and the ongoing attempt to "pacify" the tribes, the Finance Member on the Viceroy's Council, Malcolm Hailey, grew alarmed at the possible costs of an occupation of Waziristan. Often considered the premier Indian Civil Servant of the twentieth century, Hailey was a charming if unknowable man, who had begun his career doing settlement work in the Punjab but quickly moved on to greater things in the secretariat and the Government of India.[59] Hailey was fully aware of India's post-war constraints, and began a concerted campaign against the adoption of an expensive forward policy, in the process becoming its chief opponent.

Hailey received a formidable foe at the end of 1920 in the form of the new Commander-in-Chief in India, Lord Rawlinson of Trent. One of the foremost "donkeys leading lions" in the First World War, Rawlinson carried the ignominy of being the commander of the Fourth British Army at the Battle of the Somme.[60] Since then he had served in Russia and held the Aldershot command. Rawlinson was sent out to modernize the Indian Army with structural and technological reform. Faced with an Indian Army in need of retrenchment, Rawlinson was willing to negotiate. Upon arrival he confided to his journal that:

> My job is even more complicated and difficult than I had imagined. Hailey has an even stiffer job. He cannot balance his budget, and it looks as if the exchange will get worse.

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[56] A crore is 10 million.

[57] Minute by W. M. Hailey (Finance Member, Viceroy's Council), 6 May 1921, Hailey Papers (IOR) E220/3c.

[58] Memorandum by W.M. Hailey on the General Financial Position of India and its Bearing on the Military Budget, July 1921, Hailey Papers E220/3c.

[59] See John W. Cell, *Hailey: A Study in British Imperialism, 1872-1969* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[60] Peter Hart's recent *The Somme* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005) for example, places the bulk of the blame for the Somme debacle – particularly the infamous first morning – on Rawlinson's shoulders rather than on his superiors, such as Field Marshal Haig.

> In the present state of India any big increase of taxation would be dangerous, yet money must be found somehow. I have told Hailey that I am out to help him all I can.[61]

He added, however, that "security must come first." For Rawlinson, this meant the security of the Frontier.

Given the internal situation in India in this period with both the non-cooperation and the Khilafat movements in full swing, it is striking how much emphasis the Commander-in-Chief placed on Frontier defence rather than internal security. It is often assumed that the *raison d'être* for India's "garrison state" was internal control—that is, to provide "aid to civil" in times of emergency. As the former Indian (Burma) policeman, George Orwell, pointed out that, "given the Army, the officials and the business men can rub along safely enough…behind a quarter of a million bayonets."[62] This had a great deal of truth to it. Yet throughout the inter-war years, Indian Commanders-in-Chief and their General Staffs consistently ranked the Army's role in suppressing internal disturbances as secondary to Frontier defence.[63] Rawlinson was certainly of this school. Moreover, he was an avowed "forward policy" man.

It was not simply temperament that led Rawlinson to support the forward school, but legacy as well. The new Commander-in-Chief's father, the noted Assyriologist and member of the Council of India, Sir Henry Rawlinson, was one of the greatest proponents of the forward school in the nineteenth century. Alarmed at Russian expansion in Central Asia, Sir Henry had published *England and Russia in the East*, in which he attacked the close border school as "masterly inactivity" and urged the vigorous establishment of British influence over the trans-border tribes.[64] Rawlinson the father found an ally in the future Lord Roberts, another proponent of the forward school. Rawlinson the son arrived in India in 1884 and, through his father's connections, joined Roberts' staff at Army Headquarters at the height of Roberts' battle with Garnett Wolseley over the

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[61] Rawlinson Journal Entry, 18 December 1920, in Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice (ed.), *Soldier, Artist, Sportsman: The Life of General Lord Rawlinson, From His Journals and* Letters (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1928), p. 285.

[62] George Orwell, *Burmese Days* (New York: Harvest Books, 1962), p. 69.

[63] See for example Testimony provided by General A. Kirke (Chief of the Indian General Staff), to Indian Statutory Commission, 1928, Simon Papers (IOR) F77/55.

[64] See Sir Henry Rawlinson, *England and Russia in the East: A Series of Papers on the Political and Geographical Condition of Central Asia, by Major-Gen. Sir Henry Rawlinson* (London: Murray, 1875).

implementation of a forward policy. Rawlinson's biographer acknowledged that, "his many conversations with [Roberts] on the development of the problem served naturally to strengthen the views he had received from his father."[65] Confronted by Hailey's doubts about the feasibility of military occupation in Waziristan, Rawlinson threw himself into battle.

In December 1920 and January 1921 Rawlinson began his defence of the new Frontier policy while simultaneously fighting against reductions in the Indian Army budget. On the latter he was soundly defeated, but he won when it came to the Frontier.[66] He wrote:

> Hailey trotted out all the old arguments; I don't blame him, poor chap. He has to fight to save every rupee these days. But I was in a very strong position. The memories of recent events on the Frontier are still fresh, and no one who went through the anxieties of last year wants to have them repeated. The result was that I had the support of the Viceroy and the Political Department, and I have the General Staff at home at my back. With this I won approval in principle of the forward policy. It is a long step from approval in principle to the approval of definite measures, but it is something.[67]

Hailey even agreed to sign the report for Rawlinson's committee on India's military requirements, which stressed the fact that due to tribal "unrest," pan-Islamic sentiment and the supposed spread of Bolshevism, the Frontier was "more vulnerable than ever." Addressing the local dimension of the "tribal problem" in Waziristan, the Government's committee called for a forward policy of roads and military occupation. Moreover, it adhered to the Army's new orthodoxy of economics – that tribal poverty was the "root of the evil."[68]

The row over Waziristan was far from finished, however. Hailey renewed his attack in summer of 1921. Operations in Waziristan were now costing the cash-strapped government over Rs. 50 lakhs (£333,000) a month with no discernable end.[69] The Finance Member argued that the Army had, in effect, taken the Government for a ride.

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[65] Maurice, *Soldier*, p. 277.

[66] Rawlinson Journal Entry, 7 January 1921, in Maurice, *Soldier*, p. 288. Keith Jeffery provides an excellent overview of the military fiscal battle in this period in Chapter Six of his *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire*.

[67] Rawlinson Journal Entry, Undated, in Maurice, *Soldier*, p. 287.

[68] Report of Committee Appointed by the Governor-General in Council to Examine the Military Requirements of India, 1921, Hailey Papers E220/3c.

[69] Rawlinson to Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, 27 September 1921, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 64.

The General Staff now proposed the occupation of two major posts, at Razmak in central Waziristan and at Wana in the south. Hailey believed that when the forward policy was agreed to in 1920-21 no one honestly contemplated an occupation of Wana. He argued that all that was intended was a *coup de demonstration* against the local Wazirs, who would hopefully refrain from further raiding for fear of being occupied like the Mahsuds to the north at Razmak. The proposal was to stay for a fortnight and then withdraw. Now the Army was suggesting that the area be occupied. Given the state of India's finances, this was untenable.[70]

Rawlinson held firm, arguing that as he had "an opportunity now of settling the Waziristan problem once and for all, it would be suicidal …not to take advantage of it."[71] He also enjoyed strong support from the new Viceroy, Lord Reading. Through the rest of 1921 matters stood pat, with the Government continuing to endorse the occupation of central Waziristan in the face of the Finance Member's opposition. In early 1922, however, as the non-cooperation movement and the Khilafat campaign collapsed in the wake of the Chauri Chaura incident and the Moplah rebellion, the debate was joined afresh. The Government's financial situation had not improved and higher taxation was out of the question. Rawlinson had to admit that having survived on "capital for the last four years," India was "on the verge of bankruptcy."[72] On January 6th, Hailey scored his biggest victory yet, convincing the Viceroy's budget council to reduce expenditure in Waziristan by Rs. 3·36 crores (£2,240,000).[73]

Confronted with these cuts, Rawlinson was put in charge of a committee on the future of Waziristan.[74] The committee's report stated unequivocally that "the only really sound scheme is that of the permanent occupation of Waziristan by regular forces, and the domination of the country up to the Durand line." Only occupation would illustrate Britain's "firmness of purpose." Dropping any pretense of "civilizing" the Mahsuds and

[70] Minute by W. M. Hailey, 6 May 1921.

[71] Confidential Memorandum on Waziristan and the Lessons of the Last 60 Years, General Lord Rawlinson, 7 July 1921, Hailey Papers E220/3c.

[72] Rawlinson to Wilson, 4 January 1922, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 81.

[73] Rawlinson Journal Entry, 6 January 1922, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 82.

[74] Among others, the committee included the new Indian Foreign Secretary, Sir Denys Bray, the Chief Commissioner of the NWFP, Sir John Maffey, and the Resident in Waziristan, Steuart Pears.

Wazirs, the committee proposed the adoption of a Khassadar system to replace Curzon's militias, the occupation of Razmak by local levies, and a road from Razmak to Idak in the Tochi Valley.[75] The Commander-in-Chief believed that this was far from the best policy, but given India's state of "financial bankruptcy" it was the only option.[76]

Yet the Government still faced a massive deficit and Hailey pushed for a complete evacuation from Waziristan, a stance echoed by *The Times* and other newspapers in Britain.[77] Rawlinson possessed well-placed friends, however. His Chief of Staff, Major-General Sir Archibald Montgomery, whom Hailey privately called Rawlinson's "familiar and evil spirit," was then home on leave.[78] Montgomery and the India Office's military secretary, General Sydney Muspratt, whom Rawlinson referred to as his "rat" in Whitehall, gained the ear of Lord Peel, the new Conservative Secretary of State for India. In early April, Peel telegraphed the Viceroy and ordered the Government to build the circular road to Razmak, an action that had stood at the center of the policy agreed to in 1920. This would increase the Government's deficit by Rs. 2 crores (£1,333,000). This enraged Hailey, who was aware of the machinations of Rawlinson's allies in London. The next meeting of the Viceroy's Council degenerated into a shouting match, with Hailey and the Commander-in-Chief calling one another names.[79] In the aftermath of this battle, Rawlinson took the unprecedented step of writing the Secretary of State personally, asking him to effectively dismiss Hailey by way of a Governorship.[80]

Following the Secretary of State's Razmak Road order, the Committee of Imperial Defence weighed in on Waziristan. The subcommittee charged with Indian matters, which included, among others, Austen Chamberlain and Winston Churchill, hewed to an aggressive line. The committee reviewed a number of possible polices,

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[75] Report of a Committee Assembled under an Order in Council, dated January 6th 1922, to Consider Future Policy in Waziristan, Hailey Papers E220/3c. The Khassadar system was different from Curzon's militia system in that tribesmen were paid by the Government to keep the peace, but they had no British officers and were armed with their own weapons and housed in posts of their own building.

[76] Rawlinson to Major-General Sir Archibald Montgomery, 22 February 1922, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 88.

[77] Rawlinson to Montgomery, 9 April 1922, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 97.

[78] Hailey to Sir John Maffey (Chief Commissioner, NWFP), 3 October 1922, Hailey Papers E220/3c.

[79] Rawlinson to Montgomery, 20 April 1922, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 98.

[80] Rawlinson to Viscount Peel, 16 May 1922, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 105.

including the most recent recommendations of the Government of India (Rawlinson's January 1922 committee), the Indian General Staff (a proposal similar to the Government's), and the Government of India's original plan, which provided for the occupation of Waziristan with regular troops.

The committee believed that an evacuation would be disastrous. Sir Henry Dobbs, Britain's new minister in Kabul, told the committee that friendship with Afghanistan depended on "a firm adherence to our present policy of dominating Waziristan and the Khyber." They believed that the recent schemes put forward by the Government of India and the General Staff were but half measures. They therefore plumped for the original plan of 1920. Although the initial outlay would be exorbitant, they believed that the road-building would make the whole policy effective and thus lead to future economy.[81] It was hoped that further saving could be met through the use of the Royal Air Force, a policy which Churchill was pursuing in Mesopotamia.[82] Finally, in what would become a theme in the interwar period, they cited the relationship between the Frontier and the internal situation in India, saying:

> [T]he general unrest prevailing among Mahomedans in India render it an inopportune moment to initiate any scheme for partial evacuation of Waziristan, which might be interpreted by the tribesmen as a first step towards withdrawal from their country.[83]

Thus despite the desperate financial situation in India, both the India Office and the Committee of Imperial Defence decided that the security of the Empire came first.

The major issue seemingly decided, the opposing parties sat down to haggle over specifics. During that autumn, however, a bomb was lobbed by the Chief Commissioner of the NWFP, Sir John Maffey. Having previously signed on to the Government's plans for the occupation of Waziristan, Maffey now made a striking and inexplicable reversal, attacking this policy in a blistering memorandum. Like Hailey, Maffey was one of the Indian Civil Service's (ICS) "high-flyers." A noted Frontier officer, he had served as

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[81] The scheme would cost Rs. 4·68 crores in 1922, Rs. 3·98 crores in 1923-24, and Rs. 3·32 crores in 1924-25, for a total cost of Rs. 11·98 crores (£7,986,666).

[82] See David Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force, 1919-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990).

[83] Committee of Imperial Defence, Report of the Subcommittee on Indian Military Requirements, June 1922, L PO 4/4.

Political Agent, Khyber, before joining the Secretariat as Deputy Foreign Secretary. He then served as Chelmsford's Private Secretary before becoming Chief Commissioner of the NWFP. Although the Army now ran Waziristan, it was due to return to civilian control in the near future. Maffey would be in charge of the Government's policy, so his opinion held a disproportionate amount of weight. He could not be ignored.

For a man accustomed to the subtleties of power, Maffey's attack was remarkably brutal and *ad hominem*. Draped with Latin tags and Robert Burns' poetry, his onslaught began by pointing out the "greenness" of the Viceroy and the military leadership in India. Not only did they not understand Indian conditions but, he slyly implied, given the recent history of British casualties on the Western Front, their military credentials were also questionable. In fact the military was a large part of the problem in both Waziristan and the Frontier in general. The Chief Commissioner charged – not without reason – that much of the violence on the Frontier stemmed from soldiers looking for glory and a spot of action: "this great blood-sucking Frontier which has drained us of men and money for nearly a hundred years is still the playground of chance decisions, personal predilections and professional ambitions."[84] Criticisms of the mistakes made by local Political Agents that inevitably led to the Frontier's "ignoble little wars" were necessarily muffled by the honors that flowed in the wake of a campaign – the "genial rays from the Star of India," as Maffey put it. [85]

Maffey's argument touched on the cleavage between the "political" or civilian administration, and the Army on the Frontier. The military often viewed the "Politicals" as little better than traitors, more interested in assisting the tribes than in securing the safety of India. Rawlinson, for example, claimed that the Resident in Waziristan, Sir J.A.O Fitzpatrick, had the mind of a Mahsud and was delighted when Fitzpatrick was replaced by Pears, whom Rawlinson believed to be a "white man to his fingertips."[86] There was a further divide within the Frontier political cadre itself, since this service was

[84] Memorandum by Sir John Maffey: Unsolicited Views on an Unsolved Problem.
[85] Lord Lansdowne quoted in R.I. Bruce, *The Forward Policy*, p. 357.
[86] Rawlinson to Montgomery, 22 February 1922, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 88; and Rawlinson to Montgomery, 13 March 1922, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 93.

made up of both ICS men, like Maffey, and those seconded from the Indian Army.[87] Maffey posited that there were two sorts of men who came out to India: sportsmen and school-masters. The "sporting strain" was strongest in the Army and the "corrective" in the ICS. But, in his opinion, these two schools were essentially the same. The sportsman might shout "Tally Ho" and the schoolmaster might talk about a "sharp lesson," but both led to unnecessary interference with the tribes.

The idea that Waziristan could be occupied was, he maintained, sheer nonsense. All the Army held was a communication trench called the Ladha Line, which was "littered with…the skeletons of camels and motor-cars." Any attempt at a real occupation would result in constant warfare. Maffey claimed that the tribes, with their martial spirit, would "enjoy" this immensely, while the Army suffered. A forward policy would be disastrous for morale. Bases in tribal territory would be a "string of particular hells behind barbed wire…sans wife, sans children, sans joy, sans everything." For Indian troops, forward positions would be "bazaarless" prisons "amid merciless neighbours."[88] Occupation was not the answer.

Maffey asserted that rather than focusing on the "minor problem" of the tribes, the Government should expend it energies on two things: quarantining Waziristan and dealing with the "major problem" on the Frontier: Afghanistan. Kabul encouraged the tribes to "misbehave," but the major form of tribal misbehavior was raiding. The Chief Commissioner's elegant solution was to seal off Waziristan from the rest of the province through a ring road and series of guard blocks.[89]

The reaction to Maffey's memorandum was one of astonishment. On one level, officials were taken aback by the "lurid" nature of his prose, but even more than this they

[87] According to a military "political" from a later generation, Lt.-Col. G.L. Mallam, this chasm between the military and the ICS continued well into the 1930s and 40s. Mallam used the specific example of himself and Pears (who was ICS) when the latter was Chief Commissioner of the NWFP (Lt. Col. G.L. Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis and a Cassock* (London: Privately Published, 1978), p. 49, Centre of South Asian Studies, Cambridge University (CSAS).

[88] On this Maffey was quite prescient. Bases in tribal territory were essentially prisons. One British soldier recalled that a plaque at the entrance to the Landi Kotal Fort in Khyber Agency read "Abandon hope all ye who enter here" (Allen, *Plain Tales*, p. 203).

[89] Memorandum by Sir John Maffey: Unsolicited Views on an Unsolved Problem.

were surprised by the reversal of his earlier adherence to the forward policy.[90] Rawlinson found it "shocking," while the Secretary of State was thoroughly confused.[91] Peel wrote Reading that "of course every man is entitled to change his mind," but only in January Maffey had sat on a committee that unanimously stated several times that the only real solution to the Waziristan problem was permanent occupation.[92] The Viceroy asked what fresh circumstances had induced the Chief Commissioner to completely alter his opinion.[93] Maffey himself never fully explained his change of heart. It was left to speculation. The only certainty was that the Chief Commissioner's missive had once again opened the debate.

Maffey's reversal spawned a revolt among many political officers concerned with the Frontier. The former Chief Commissioner of NWFP, Sir Hamilton Grant, and the Indian Foreign Secretary, Sir Denys Bray, both came out against occupation. Like Hailey, they resented the General Staff's influence over policy discussions.[94] Not all defected. Pears, the new Resident in Waziristan, was a staunch advocate of occupation as was his deputy, Arthur Parsons.[95] Reading, whom Rawlinson believed to be "reliable," despite the fact that he was both a lawyer and a Jew, began to waver.[96] He sent two members of the Viceroy's Council, Sir William Vincent and Sir Muhammad Shafi, to investigate the Frontier. [97]

On their return, Shafi in particular was critical of the Government's policy in Waziristan.[98] One of the few Indians whose opinion was sought, Shafi agreed with Maffey on a number of issues. But his report was more cogent than the veteran Frontier officer's. More than anything, Shafi put the General Staff's talk of "civilizing" the tribes in his crosshairs. He believed that the tribes would elude the military's "steam-roller" by

[90] Note by Sir Denys Bray, 11 October 1922, Hailey Papers E220/3c.
[91] Rawlinson Journal Entry, 17 October 1922, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 117.
[92] Report of a Committee Assembled under an Order in Council, dated January 6th 1922, to Consider Future Policy in Waziristan.
[93] Secretary of State to Viceroy, 25 October 1922, Reading Papers (IOR) E238/5.
[94] Hailey to Maffey, 3 October 1922.
[95] Maffey to Hailey, 7 December 1922, Hailey Papers E220/3c.
[96] Rawlinson to Lord Derby, 9 May 1922, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 103.
[97] Maffey to Hailey, 17 November 1922, Hailey Papers E220/3c.
[98] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 16 November 1922, Reading Papers E238/5.

melting into Afghanistan, which would likely lead to yet another war. The Mahsuds and Wazirs would never agree to permanent occupation. There was more, however. He wrote that:

> Apart from considerations based upon the principle of self-determination accepted at the Versailles Conference, even a casual consideration of the existing conditions, internal and external must make it abundantly clear that India cannot afford such a philanthropic adventure. There is within our own Indian territories sufficient ignorance, poverty, and disease calling for all the efforts that we can make towards their eradication.

Since the Great War, India had faced financial deficits amounting to over Rs. 100 crores (£66,666,666):

> It is undeniable that heavy military expenditure, including that on the Frontier, has contributed very largely towards the financial stringency which we have had to face, resulting in the crippling of our educational, sanitary, and industrial activities…We have, in the existing financial conditions, to cut our coat according to our cloth; otherwise the resulting dangers, financial and political, would be ruinous for India.[99]

Shafi's argument, with its heavy dose of common sense in lieu of the usual wishful thinking, was compelling. Moreover, Hailey, who had returned from home leave in a new incarnation as Home Member on the Viceroy's Council, threw himself back into the breach. Grieving over the death of his 24-year-old daughter who had died on October 10th, Hailey wrote Peel an excessively long 40-page memorandum urging a reversal of policy.[100]

Given this renewed resistance along with Shafi's report, Reading asked Peel for a Royal Commission.[101] The Secretary of State refused. He told Reading that neither he nor the Committee of Imperial Defence would accept another vacillation in policy simply because a "frontier officer" had "conscientious objections" to carrying out the new policy and was supported by "two Members of the Viceroy's Council, who had no special

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[99] Confidential Memorandum on the Waziristan Problem by Muhammad Shafi, December 1922, Hailey Papers E220/3c.

[100] Confidential Memorandum from Hailey to Eric Burden (Civilian Military Secretary in the India Office), 29 October 1922, Hailey Papers E220/3c. See L. G. Pine, *The New Extinct Peerage 1884-1971: Containing Extinct, Abeyant, Dormant and Suspended Peerages With Genealogies and Arms* (London: Heraldry Today, 1972), p. 141.

[101] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 28 December 1922, Reading Papers E238/5. By this point Rawlinson was privately referring to Shafi as a "cur-dog"! (Rawlinson to Montgomery, 22 November 1922, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 119).

qualifications."[102] The game was nearly at its end. Maffey and his allies made a last ditch attempt to ward off the new policy at the end of January through *The Times*, but this served only to further convince the India Office and the Committee of Imperial Defence of the need to pursue the forward policy in Waziristan. On January 30th, Peel sent a telegram to Reading ordering the Government of India to adopt the new policy.[103] Instructions to execute the sanctioned policy "with utmost determination and vigour" were sent to the Frontier on February 23rd. The new forward policy had prevailed.[104]

CONCLUSION

The post-war crisis of Empire was fueled in large part by Britain's search for security, which, as one notable historian wrote, is "like love affairs or solvency, it is here today and gone tomorrow."[105] Britain's war-time and post-war expansion, carried out in the name of security led, ironically, to greater insecurity. Throughout the Empire, the initial British response to the outbursts of colonial nationalism soon took a conciliatory turn in which British security interests were maintained while outright control was relaxed. Both Southern Ireland and Egypt gained independence, but at the cost of the treaty ports and the occupation of the Canal zone. In Iraq, Arab rulers were put in place and the path to independence assured. Even in Afghanistan, outside the colonial empire, but where Britain had theoretically exercised control over foreign policy, complete independence was won after the Anglo-Afghan War of 1919. Placating the Afghans was considered the best way to guarantee Britain's strategic interests.

In India as well, the unrest of the war years and their aftermath led to major concessions. Chief among these were the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. But there were others, including the 1919 Anglo-Indian convention that, in practice, granted the Government of India control over its tariff policy, and the decision to ignore the

[102] Secretary of State to Viceroy, 6 December 1922, Reading Papers E238/5.
[103] Telegram from the Secretary of State to the Viceroy, 30 January 1923, Hailey Papers E220/3c.
[104] Telegram from the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India to the General Officer Commanding, Waziriforce, 23 February 1923, Hailey Papers E220/3c.
[105] Gallagher, "Nationalisms and the Crisis of Empire," p. 358.

recommendations of the Esher Committee. This last was of great importance, since it was an acknowledgment that India would not and could not pay to be Britain's policeman in the East. Hand in hand with this was the decision, on financial grounds, to shrink the Indian Army. Taken together, these reforms and agreements represented a dramatic change in the way that Britain and India interacted with one another. It was of course empire by different means, but it was still a step back from the overt and overweening imperialism of the war years.

Yet in Waziristan there was not a retreat from Empire but rather a revanche – a return to, and aggrandizement of, the forward policy of the nineteenth century. Despite the dire financial constraints facing India, and the fact that large sums would have to be taken from elsewhere to pay for it, London, in collusion with the leadership of the Indian Army, insisted on a forward policy. Much of this stemmed from the ideological hold that the Frontier held over the British in India. For this was the premier rampart of the Empire and could not be compromised. An aggressive policy should be followed, in spite of the protests of Hailey and the Indians, or as Rawlinson put it, the "black men," in the Viceroy's Council and Legislative Assembly.[106]

The decision to occupy Waziristan also demonstrates the continued dominance of the Army within the British Raj in the interwar period. The Army had to accept some troop reductions in the name of retrenchment, but they balked when it came to the Frontier, which many in the officer corps saw as sacred ground. Maffey's characterization of the relationship between the Army and the tribes was in many ways correct, but not entirely: the General Staff's decision to utilize the language of civilization and economic development shows that the Army too could play the role of schoolmaster on the Frontier.

Rawlinson saw very little of what had become his project. Slated to return to England as Chief of the Imperial General Staff, he collapsed with appendicitis in March 1925 and died shortly thereafter. Hailey, having lost the battle of the Frontier, threw himself into work as Governor of the Punjab and later still, the United Provinces. After

[106] Rawlinson to Montgomery, 22 January 1923, in Jacobsen, *Rawlinson*, p. 135.

retirement he became an imperial figure, compiling the monumental *African Survey* and working for Britain's imperial interests vis-à-vis the Americans in the Second World War.[107]

Rawlinson believed Maffey had reconciled himself to the new policy, but Maffey resigned in protest from the ICS on the day he reached a pensionable 25 years, a move which the future Governor of NWFP, the famously even-keeled George Cunningham, considered "theatrical."[108] Maffey's career was far from over, however. He too became an imperial figure, serving as Governor-General of the Sudan (1925-1933), and later as Permanent Undersecretary at the Colonial Office before finishing his career as the British envoy in Dublin (1939-48).[109] As for Waziristan and the Frontier, the forward policy was widely considered a success throughout the 1920s. The military occupation, roads, allowances, and the newest tool for tribal pacification, the aerial bombing, were credited with keeping Waziristan relatively quiet. But concern remained that once a new generation of tribesmen grew up and forgot the last time the Army's "schoolmasters" had "taught them a lesson," there would be another tribal conflagration. Writing in 1929, Evelyn Howell, who served as Resident in Waziristan from 1924 to 1926, remarked that like Tipperary, the ultimate solution to Waziristan had "a long long way to go."[110]

[107] See William Malcolm Hailey, Baron Hailey, *An African Survey: A Study of Problems Arising in Africa South of the Sahara* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938).

[108] George Cunningham to his Sister, 22 May 1926, Cunningham Papers (IOR) D670/38.

[109] Maffey thus served the India Office, the Foreign Office, the Colonial Office and the Dominions' Office in the course of his long career.

[110] Howell, *Mizh*, p. 101.

CHAPTER TWO:
A CIGARETTE IN A POWDER MAGAZINE:
THE FRONTIER, NATIONALISM, AND REFORM, 1919-1930

In August 1917, Britain's Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, announced Britain's long-term goals in India. He declared that the British intended to increase the number of Indians in "every branch of the administration," and develop self-governing institutions, "with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire."[1] This declaration, made in the heat of war and in a time of growing opposition to British rule, opened the way for the enactment of the cautious and gradualist Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919.

British rule in India was premised on the central administration's control of India's finances and the Indian Army. With the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, the British hoped to maintain their grip on the military and finance while simultaneously strengthening the hand of moderate nationalists. Key to this effort was the transfer of local government, public health, education, land revenue administration and "law and order" from the Central government to the provinces. At the provincial level a policy of "dyarchy" was inaugurated in which the agriculture, public works, local self-government and Indian education portfolios were transferred to Indian ministers, while British governors and their executive councils kept control over reserved subjects such as irrigation, land revenue administration, police, justice, and prisons, as well as control of newspapers, books, and presses.[2] The reforms also placed the "presidencies" of Bengal,

[1] P.G. Robb, *The Government of India and Reform: Policies Towards Politics and the Constitution, 1916-1921* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 318.

[2] At the center, the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms enlarged the Central Legislative Assembly and freed the Viceroy's Council from the constraints of an official majority. The Reforms also overhauled and enlarged the franchise. All ex-soldiers were automatically enfranchised. In all, one tenth of adult Indian males were given the vote. However, rural areas were given dominant representation in the allocation of seats between rural and urban and special communal electorates linked to reserved seats were provided for Muslims, Punjabi Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians, and Europeans. Seats were still reserved for various interest groups and communal representation also operated in the Central Legislature in Delhi and Simla (Judith M. Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 204-206).

Bombay, and Madras and the provinces on a more equal footing, with provinces like the Punjab being raised up to full governor's status.

The Reforms were not extended to the whole of India, however. The North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) was exempted from the new system "for reasons of strategy."[3] Instead, both the administered and tribal tracts of the province remained under the autocratic rule of the Chief Commissioner and the Government of India throughout the 1920s. Although the NWFP eventually became a full "Montagu-Chelmsford" province in 1932, it did so only after the province exploded in revolt in April 1930.

This chapter examines the British administration's decision to withhold reforms from the NWFP from the Third Afghan War in 1919 to the publication of the Simon Commission's report in 1930. It argues that because the British viewed the Frontier as a place geographically, ethnically and culturally apart from the rest of India, they believed that reforms could be indefinitely postponed. This view originated in the British fixation on external threats to the North-West Frontier and on the tribal areas. Reforms that were deemed safe enough in the rest of India were considered too dangerous on the Frontier. Since, as Clement Attlee argued, "the inherent right of a man to smoke a cigarette must necessarily be curtailed if he lives in a powder magazine" so too must reforms be withheld on this rampart of Empire.[4] Moreover, there was a deeply held belief among the British administration that this Pathan Muslim majority province possessed neither the means nor the desire for western representative institutions. Yet, despite these old assurances about the Pathan "character," the All-Indian context was changing in the 1920s, with nationalists taking an increasing interest in the Frontier. In response, the British increasingly sought to seal off the NWFP from the rest of the subcontinent and in particular the "political India" of the Indian National Congress. This ill-fated gambit blinded the authorities to the nationalist upsurge in the settled districts that ultimately came to a head in April 1930.

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[3] Government of India Act, 1919, quoted in Indian Statutory Commission, *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, Vol. 1, *Survey* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1930), p. 316.

[4] Draft by Major Attlee on the Simon Commission's Recommendations for NWFP – Suggested Continuation to SC/J566, 22 November 1929, Simon Papers, India Office Records (IOR), F77/49.

ROWLATT, THE *HIJRAT*, AND REFORM

Throughout the First World War the Frontier remained superficially quiet. The Mahsuds engaged in a number of border raids in 1916 and the Khyber Pass witnessed the comings and goings of German and Turkish agents seeking the overthrow of British rule in India, but by and large the region seemed peaceful.[5] Like the rest of India, the Frontier sacrificed both men and material to Britain's war effort. The settled districts of the NWFP contributed some 84,822 men to the armed forces.[6] The tribal belt contributed less, and the high rate of desertion among tribal troops meant that recruitment was quickly ended. As a whole, however, the Frontier made an impressive contribution to Britain's war against the Central Powers.

The relative peacefulness of the Frontier was shattered by the Third Anglo-Afghan War in 1919, which swept through the tribal belt. Yet the first signs of trouble on the Frontier came not from Waziristan or the Khyber Pass, but from the settled district of Peshawar where, by early spring 1919, there was growing unrest over the Government's adoption of what were known at the "Rowlatt Acts." During the war the British had enlarged their already substantial extra-judicial powers with the Defence of India Act in 1915. But, rather than reverting to the pre-war rule of law in 1918, the Government, wary of the growing discontent fueled by inflation, high food prices, and political repression, convened a committee under a British judge, Mr. Justice S.A.T. Rowlatt, to investigate

[5] Among the most notorious anti-British conspiracies was the "Silk Letters" case of 1916. The plot involved a Deobandi Maulvi named Ubaidullah Sindhi who travelled to Afghanistan in 1915 where he was to set up a base for a future invasion of India through the Khyber Pass. The Afghan and Indian invaders would then rally the Pathan tribes and signal a general uprising of Indian Muslims. Ubaidullah communicated with his co-conspirators in India via hidden messages carried by travelers through the Afghan passes. In August 1916 one of these messengers fell into British hands – the plan was written on the silk lining of his coat (see *Report of the Sedition Committee, 1918* (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1919), pp. 176-177 and (IOR) L P&S 10/633: The Silk Letters Case). See also E.B. Howell, *Mizh: A Monograph of Government's Relations with the Mahsud Tribe* (Simla: Government of India Press, 1931), p. 71.

[6] The settled districts included Hazara, Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan. See Rai Bahadur Diwan Chand Obhrai, *The Evolution of North-West Frontier Province: Being A Survey of the History and Constitutional Development of N.-W. F. Province in India* (Peshawar: London Book Company (India), Ltd., 1938), p. 75.

Indian "sedition."[7] Rowlatt's committee suggested what amounted to a continuation of the war-time controls throughout India. The Government duly pushed bills based on Rowlatt's recommendations through the Central Legislature in the teeth of unanimous Indian opposition.

This decision undercut any goodwill that may have been gained by the enactment of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. Gandhi, a relative newcomer on the Indian stage, called for protests throughout the country. The British, who had considered the Frontier apolitical, were shocked by the sight of large anti-Rowlatt demonstrations in Peshawar.[8] The Chief Commissioner of the NWFP, Sir George Roos-Keppel, wrote:

> The effect of the Rowlatt Bill agitation has been extraordinary, and I am receiving petitions to the Viceroy from every tribe, every community in the district, the biggest men have signed these, even including the ones who are most on our side. Many of my most reliable and oldest Indian friends tell me that the men of the Indian Army are also very bitter against the Bill.[9]

Protests broke out in other areas of the NWFP as well. The future Frontier nationalist leader, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, claimed that a demonstration in Peshawar District drew tens of thousands – it also provided him with his first of many trips to British prisons after the imposition of martial law that spring.[10]

Down country, in the Punjab, what the British called "anti-Rowlatt agitation" grew violent after a female English missionary was assaulted on the streets of Amritsar in April 1919. Convinced that India was on the brink of revolution, the Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab and former Chief Commissioner of the NWFP, Sir Michael O'Dwyer,

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[7] See *Report of the Sedition Committee, 1918*.

[8] L.F. Rushbrook Williams, *India in 1919: A Report Prepared for Presentation to Parliament in Accordance with the Requirements of the Government of India Act (5 & 6 Geo. V., Chap. 61)* (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1920), p. 9.

[9] Roos-Keppel to Sir John Maffey (Private Secretary to the Viceroy), 8 May 1919, quoted in Abdul Ali Arghandawi, *British Imperialism and Afghanistan's Struggle for Independence, 1914-1921* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1989), p. 176. Arghandawi's study, often overlooked in subsequent bibliographies, is one of the better political studies of the relationship between British India and Afghanistan in the era of the Third Anglo-Afghan War. It is based primarily on the Foreign & Political Department papers in the National Archives of India (New Delhi).

[10] Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *My Life and Struggle: Autobiography of Badshah Khan as Narrated to K. B. Narang* (Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1969), pp. 40-41.

called in the Army.[11] The commanding officer sent to Amritsar, General Reginald Dyer, declared all public meetings illegal. When a large gathering nevertheless took place in an enclosed space known as Jallianwallah Bagh on the afternoon of April 13th, Dyer moved in his troops to break up the meeting. Rather than issuing the customary warning, Dyer's troops immediately opened fire on the crowd. By the Government's own estimate, 379 men, women, and children died in the ensuing melee – the actual death toll was probably higher.[12] Dyer's actions proved catastrophic for the Raj. Indian nationalists turned against the Government and the massacre is rightly seen as a key moment in the long-term demise of British rule in India.[13]

The massacre at Amritsar further incensed public opinion on the Frontier, but its more important impact was to provide the Afghan Amir Amanullah with a pretext for the Third Anglo-Afghan War in May 1919.[14] Amanullah claimed that the war was intended to save Indian Muslims from "English tyranny."[15] Although the trans-border tribes eventually rallied to the Amir's banner, the first support for Amanullah's holy war came not from the tribal belt but from Peshawar. The city's Afghan postmaster, Ghulam Haider, assisted by the local "Indian Revolutionary Committee," planned to recruit 7,000

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[11] From his publication of *The Punjab Disturbances of April, 1919: Criticism of the Hunter Committee Report* (London: Indo-British Association, 1919), until his death by an Indian assassin's bullet in 1940, O'Dwyer stood as one of the principal opponents to Indian constitutional advancement. O'Dwyer's deeply conservative and reactionary approach to India has been attributed to a number of influences, from his Irish background to the strong paternalist traditions of the so-called "Punjab School". Yet O'Dwyer spent a considerable amount of career serving in the NWFP (1901-1908), including a stint as acting Chief Commissioner in 1906. This period of his life, when he was charged with carrying out the NWFP's draconian "Frontier Crimes Regulation" regime made an impression on O'Dwyer. His use of courts martial, public floggings and aerial bombardment in 1919 certainly mirrored "law and order" practices in the Frontier Province (See Sir Michael O'Dwyer, *India as I Knew It, 1885-1925* (London: Constable and Co., 1925), pp. 104-134).

[12] *India in 1919*, p. 36. Also see *Report of the Committee Appointed in the Government of India to Investigate the Disturbances in the Punjab, etc. [and Evidence taken Before the Disorders Inquiry Committee]* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1920).

[13] See, for example, Alfred Draper's *Amritsar: The Massacre that Ended the Raj* (London: Cassell, 1981). See also Nigel Collett's recent biography of Dyer, *The Butcher of Amritsar: General Reginald Dyer* (London: Hambeldon Press, 2005).

[14] For the Third Anglo-Afghan War, see Chapter One.

[15] Amanullah argued that British despotism was brought to light by the Amritsar massacre. At a durbar in Kabul in late April he read aloud letters from Indian Muslims about the shootings, declaring "What tyranny has been practiced on our brothers on India; not only this, but Baghdad and holy places have been seized by tyranny. I ask you if you are prepared for holy war. If so gird up your loins. The time has come" (Quoted in Arghandawi, *British Imperialism*, p. 176).

Afridi tribesmen to attack the cantonment area, destroy mobilization stores, and kill the resident Europeans. What would have been a major blow to both the British presence on the Frontier and their tenure in India itself was narrowly averted by the quick actions of the Chief Commissioner, Roos-Keppel. Hearing of the plot, the Chief Commissioner closed the gates to the city on the morning of May 8th and surrounded it with troops, arresting Ghulam Haider and defusing the plot.[16]

In the wake of this intrigue, the Government of India contemplated extending the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms to the NWFP. Roos-Keppel, an old school paternalist, vetoed this. In spite of the numerous anti-Rowlatt demonstrations throughout Peshawar District, he insisted that the province was untouched by the nationalism that was affecting the rest of India. The reforms were therefore unnecessary. Moreover, he argued, democratic reforms would be a poor cousin to the already robust *jirga* system where the Frontier's leading men could express themselves to the administration in a more honest manner than they would in British-style assembly.[17]

His health deteriorating, Roos-Keppel left the Frontier in autumn 1919 and was replaced as Chief Commissioner by India's foreign secretary, Sir Hamilton Grant. Grant believed that British policies could catch more flies with honey, a philosophy borne out in his recent negotiations on the Afghan peace treaty.[18] He extended this view to the subject of reforms on the Frontier. Within weeks of assuming the Chief Commissionership he wrote to the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, asking him to approve a provincial advisory council. Chelmsford, however, denied the request.[19] Many Frontier officers also eschewed Grant's liberal approach. Sir Olaf Caroe, who was then beginning his career, recalled that although Grant had many fine qualities, including a "rather Rabelaisan turn of wit," he was "not a good head of the North-West Frontier." Caroe believed that Grant had been in "Delhi and Simla far too long, did not really care for the Pathans and found Frontier life too dangerous and exciting for a man who enjoyed the

[16] Arghandawi, *British Imperialism*, p. 179.
[17] Note by Roos-Keppel to Government of India, 15 October 1919, (IOR) L P&J 9/19.
[18] See Chapter One.
[19] Stephen Alan Rittenberg, *Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Pakhtuns: The Independence Movement in India's North-West Frontier Province* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1988), p. 48.

fleshpots."[20] Regardless of Grant's sympathies or administrative abilities, the All-Indian political situation – in the form of the Khilafat movement – precipitated further upheaval in the Frontier province in the spring and summer of 1920.

The Khilafat movement had its origins in Muslim objections to fighting the Ottoman Empire in the First World War. These smoldering grievances were aggravated in the aftermath of the war when it became clear that Britain and her allies meant to vitiate the old empire, stripping Turkey of all its possessions, save Anatolia. Many Indian Muslims viewed this as a direct assault upon the Ottoman Sultan, who was also the Khalifah, or spiritual head, of Islam. The belief that Islam was in danger led to the establishment of the Khilafat movement in 1919. Led by Mohamed and Shaukat Ali, it soon took on a nationalist hue, allying with Gandhi in 1920.[21]

In the NWFP, where Muslims comprised over 95% of the population, the Khilafat movement made considerable inroads. In particular, the Khilafat movement on the Frontier was characterized by what was called the *Hijrat.*[22] Based on Muhammad's flight from Mecca to Medina in 622, a *Hijrat* constitutes an emigration to *daru'l-Islam* (land of peace), where Muslim rule and law are supreme and the abandonment of *daru'l-harb* (land of war), where it is not. Among Indian Muslims, the exact status of India vis-à-vis the Islamic world had been a subject of debate since the inception of British rule. In the wake of the First World War, with the future of the Khalifah and the Muslim holy places at Mecca and Medina in the balance, the argument over India's status began anew. The

[20] Unpublished Caroe Memoirs, Caroe Papers (IOR) F203/79.

[21] For appraisals of the Khilafat movement see Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); B.R. Nanda, *Gandhi: Pan-Islamism, Imperialism and Nationalism in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989); M. Naeem Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British Indian Politics: A Study of the Khilafat Movement, 1918-1924* (Leiden: Brill, 1999). For published documents see Mushirul Hasan (ed.), *Mohamed Ali in Indian Politics: Select Writings*, Vols. 1-3 (New Delhi, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1982) and Mushirul Hasan and Margrit Pernau (eds.), *Regionalizing Pan-Islam: Documents of the Khilafat Movement* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2005).

[22] The few works that deal with the *Hijrat* in any detail are Dietrich Reetz's small monograph *Hijrat: The Flight of the Faithful – A British File on the Exodus of Muslim Peasants from North India to Afghanistan in 1920* (Berlin: Forschungsshwerpunkt Moderner Orient, 1995) and Chapter Four in Qureshi. See also Lal Baha, "The Hijrat Movement and the North-West Frontier Province," in Fazal-ur-Rahim Marwat and Sayed Ali Shah Kakakhel (eds.), *Afghanistan and the Frontier* (Peshawar: Emjay Books International, 1993), pp. 168-183.

leadership of the Khilafat movement believed that British actions in the Middle East meant that India was now *daru'l-harb*. The Ali brothers informed the Viceroy that given the choice between "*Jehad* or *Hijrat*," the best option for India's "weakened" Muslims was immigration to the *daru'l-Islam* of Afghanistan.[23]

Encouraged by the Amir Amanullah, emigrants or *muhajirin* en route to Afghanistan began to stream into the NWFP in the summer of 1920. The bulk of *muhajirin* initially came from the Sind, but by the end of July the overwhelming majority hailed from the administered districts of the NWFP. At this point, Grant reported that the *Hijrat* movement was "seriously affecting the rural areas" of the Peshawar District and hundreds flocked daily to Peshawar City to join the exodus.[24] The Charsadda subdivision of Peshawar, which would become the epicenter of Frontier nationalism in the 1930s, was drained of people and crops rotted in the fields. Rather than clamp down on the movement, the Chief Commissioner urged his superiors in Simla to pressure the British Government to revise the soon to be signed Sèvres Treaty with Turkey. Grant wrote:

> Though the Hijrat movement and the non-cooperation movement may die a natural death, these movements will be replaced by others of perhaps a more dangerous kind; and we shall not again secure the whole-hearted loyalty of the Muslim community until we have done something to redress what…they consider a breach of faith, a bitter wrong, and a deep injury to their religion.[25]

In reply, the Indian Foreign Secretary informed Grant that the "last word" had been spoken on the Turkish Peace and recommended that the authorities in NWFP "take stronger action" against the Khilafat "agitators."[26]

Despite this advice, Grant continued to treat the *Hijrat* with a strict policy of non-interference, and no action was taken to prevent the movement of emigrants across the

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[23] Qureshi, *Pan-Islam*, p. 180.

[24] Chief Commissioner, NWFP (Sir Hamilton Grant) to Foreign Secretary, Government of India (Sir Denys Bray), 13 July 1920, (IOR) L P&J 6/1701, and Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Acting Foreign Secretary, Government of India (A.N.L. Cater), 27 July 1920, L P&J 6/1701.

[25] Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Acting Foreign Secretary, Government of India (A.N.L. Cater), 27 July 1920. At the same time, the Liberal Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, was making similar appeals to the peacemakers assembled in Paris. Considering his arguments something of a nuisance, David Lloyd George believed that Montagu was behaving more like a "successor to the throne of Aurangzeb" than a "member of the British Cabinet" (Lloyd George to Montagu, quoted in Margaret Macmillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2001), p. 403).

[26] Acting Foreign Secretary, Government of India to Chief Commissioner, NWFP, 3 August 1920, L P&J 6/1701.

Afghan frontier. In the first week of August *hartals*, or strikes, were observed throughout the province and by mid-month over 20,000 *muhajirin* had migrated to Afghanistan.[27] Of these, all but 3,000 came from the NWFP.[28] By this point both the Government of India and the Army began to worry. Fretting over desertions and a possible uprising throughout the Frontier, local military commanders insisted that the civil authorities' reluctance to interfere in "religious matters" meant that rumors about the destruction of Mecca went unchecked and were even encouraged – a charge which the NWFP government strenuously denied.[29] The Viceroy was increasingly concerned about "the close historical connection between the *Hijrat* and *Jihad*."[30]

Through all this, Grant remained calm. He knew from intelligence reports that the massive influx of *muhajirin* was taxing Afghanistan's rudimentary infrastructure. Moreover, there was growing unrest among the Afghans displaced by the newcomers.[31] Grant gambled that the Afghan side of the equation would soon collapse and the *Hijrat* end. Grant was correct. Overwhelmed by Indian emigrants, Amanullah issued a *firman* on August 9th suspending the *Hijrat*. Five days later, migrants were turned away by Afghan authorities at the Khyber Pass and migrants began to return home. Grant reported that the local situation was rapidly improving and that the local Khilafat Committee realized that they had "aroused forces they cannot control and are paralysed with fear of a public who are bitterly resentful at having thus been duped."[32] Conditions for the 30,000 *muhajirin* already in Afghanistan grew increasingly grim over the following months and the trickle of returning migrants turned into a river. The NWFP administration set up a privately funded relief effort for the estimated 17,000 returning emigrants.[33]

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[27] Viceroy (Chelmsford) to Secretary of State (Montagu), 6 August 1920, L P&J 6/1701.

[28] Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Foreign Secretary, Government of India, 10 August 1920, P&J 6/1701.

[29] The General Officer Commanding, Northern Command, Murree, to the Chief of the General Staff, India (Sir George Kirkpatrick), 14 August 1920, L P&J 6/1701.

[30] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 13 August 1920, L P&J 6/1701.

[31] Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Foreign Secretary, Government of India and Resident, Waziristan, 10 August 1920, L P&J 6/1701.

[32] Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Foreign Secretary, Government of India, 14 August 1920, L P&J 6/1701.

[33] Foreign Secretary, Government of India to Chief Commissioner, NWFP, 23 August 1920, L P&J 6/1701.

Political conditions in the administered districts gradually calmed over the following months. Amanullah's suspension effectively ended the *Hijrat* and took the steam out of the province's Khilafat movement. Telling the Viceroy that "we are always so afraid of appearing weak that we lose our opportunities of profitable generosity," Grant enacted a conciliatory policy towards the thousands that trekked back through the Khyber to India, helping them resettle and offering relief.[34] This policy succeeded and what had begun as a challenge to British rule on the Frontier served to consolidate the Raj's hold over the now thoroughly disenchanted *muhajirin*.[35] Moreover, the failure of the *Hijrat* and the role that the local religious leadership played in encouraging it, convinced nationalists such as Abdul Ghaffar Khan that any future anti-British movement must jettison the mullahs.[36]

As part of his sympathetic policy, Grant again requested the extension of reforms to the NWFP in early 1921. This time Chelmsford offered to grant the province a Legislative Council. As he prepared for retirement from the service, Grant informed a provincial Durbar that the province could soon expect new reforms.[37] Grant retired in March 1921, and Sir John Maffey replaced as him as Chief Commissioner. Although Maffey and Grant agreed on many aspects of Frontier policy, including their opposition to the Government's new Waziristan plan, Maffey strongly opposed reforms in the NWFP. The new Chief Commissioner informed the Government's Foreign Secretary, Sir Denys Bray, that he found "absolutely no interest or enthusiasm" for reform among the people that "count[ed]" in the province: the large landowning Khans. Rather than providing the NWFP with representative reforms, Maffey believed that the administration should "put the clock back and revive the powers of the great Khans." Only under firm conservative leadership would the province "fulfill its role of being a roof to the rest of

[34] Grant to Chelmsford, 20 July 1920, Grant Papers (IOR) D660/25.

[35] Reetz also makes this point in his *Hijrat: The Flight of the Faithful*, p. 74.

[36] Interview with Khudai Khidmatgar leader Abdul Aziz in Mukulika Banerjee, *The Pathan Unarmed: Opposition &Memory in the North-West Frontier* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 50.

[37] Copy of speech delivered by Grant at Provincial Durbar at Peshawar, 28 February 1921, Grant Papers (IOR) D660/26.

India and not a constant source of danger."[38] The Government of India concurred, and once again reforms were off the table.

THE BRAY COMMITTEE AND THE QUESTION OF REFORMS

In September 1921, however, the Indian Legislative Assembly passed a resolution urging a committee to examine the possibility of re-amalgamating the five administered districts of the NWFP with the Punjab, from which they were detached in 1901.[39] The Viceroy believed that the inhabitants of the Frontier were indeed discontented with the *status quo* and that some sort of "remedial measures" should to be taken.[40] In April 1922 a committee was set up under Sir Denys Bray.[41] The committee's first charge was the question of re-amalgamation with the Punjab. Their second question was whether, in the likely event that re-amalgamation was deemed unworkable, internal reforms should be enacted in the NWFP.

In early May 1922, the committee members travelled to the NWFP and began taking evidence. They heard from a variety of witnesses, including Frontier officials, representatives of the local bar, large landowning Khans, and spokesmen for civic organizations. On the first question – the subject of re-amalgamation – the witnesses split along communal and racial lines. The vast majority of the Muslims interviewed – almost all of them large landowners – came out against it, arguing that the Pathans in the tribal belt and the settled districts should remain within a single administration. The Europeans in the Frontier administration, such as Maffey, were also opposed, and usually stressed the strategic need to keep the entire trans-Indus tracts under imperial rather than local

[38] Quoted in Rittenberg, *Ethnicity*, p. 49.

[39] Report of the North-West Frontier Enquiry Committee and Minutes of Dissent by Mr. T. Rangachariar and Mr. N.M. Samarth, 1922, (IOR) V/26/247/1. The Resolution was introduced by Sir Sivaswamy Aiyer, Member Legislative Assembly (M.L.A.), Madras.

[40] Viceroy (Reading) to Secretary of State (Peel), 25 May 1922, Reading Papers (IOR) E238/5.

[41] Along with Bray, the Committee included Saiyid Raza Ali (Member of the Council of State), Rao Bahadur Tiruvenkata Rangachariar (M.L.A. Madras), Chaudri Shahabuddin (M.L.A. Punjab), Narayan Madhav Samarth (M.L.A. Bombay), Khan Bahadur Abdul Rahim Khan (M.L.A. NWFP), A.H. Parker (District and Sessions Judge, Punjab), and H.N. Bolton (Revenue Commissioner, NWFP) .

control.[42] The NWFP's small, urban, Hindu community, which made up much of the merchant and legal populations of the towns, tended to support re-amalgamation with the Punjab.

Deliberating over its findings in the fall of 1922, the committee too cleaved along communal lines. The Muslims and Europeans on the Committee declared that not only was it impossible to divide the tribal tracts from the five administered districts of the NWFP, but furthermore, it would be unworkable to re-amalgamate these districts with the Punjab. The two Hindu members came to the opposite conclusion, arguing that re-amalgamation was not only advisable but necessary.[43] The dissenting members were motivated in part by the fact that as an "infidel" minority, the Hindu population suffered disproportionately from tribal raids on the settled districts. They believed that Hindus would receive greater protection from the Punjab administration.[44]

The majority's report stated clearly that "the ultimate object of our whole frontier policy is the security of India" and that no political arrangement in the NWFP could be made that did not address the continual threats posed by the trans-frontier tribes. The committee reasoned that one of the Government's few powers over the independent tribes was the fact that most of the tribes were economically dependent on the districts, where they came to trade and offer seasonal labor. As such, unified control over the administered and independent areas of the province, in the person of the Chief Commissioner, was essential. The report argued:

> If we place an Agent to the Governor General in charge of the tribal tracts alone and divest him of all authority in the districts, we deprive him of his only peaceful means of controlling the tribes. They will be at times under one master and at times under another, in a position to play off one against the other – as only trans-frontier tribesmen can – with countless chances of creating friction between the two.

Only if the Government of India was prepared to mount a massive military operation across the width and breadth of the tribal belt and impose a forward policy of total occupation could the amalgamation of the NWFP with the Punjab be countenanced. The

[42] Interview with Sir John Maffey, Chief Commissioner, NWFP, North West Frontier Enquiry Committee, 1922, (IOR) V/26/247/2.

[43] Report of the North-West Frontier Enquiry Committee.

[44] Minutes of Dissent by Mr. T Rangachariar and Mr. N.M. Samarth, V/26/247/1.

fact that two members of the committee did not sign on to these findings, the majority argued, stemmed from the fact that they were both Hindus from the south (Bombay and Madras). A north Indian, even one who wore the "rosiest coloured spectacles," could not deny the "grimness of the frontier or its ever present peril to all-India." [45]

After dismissing re-amalgamation, the committee's report moved on to the issue of reforms. During their tour of the Frontier, Bray's committee collected a number of views, the most important of which was the Chief Commissioner's. In his interview, Maffey took a less reactionary view than he had in his correspondence with Bray the previous year, but he still counseled against reforms. The Chief Commissioner told the committee that he was in sympathy with the "reform movement," but that the question of extending representative institutions to the NWFP was "difficult." Cleverly, he averred that the danger of reform was not to the Frontier *per se*, but rather to India as a whole. He argued that any "rash move" – by this he meant reforms – in the NWFP might unleash so much turmoil that it could lead to the "end the whole reform movement in India." Maffey further speculated that if the committee recommended reforms, then they needed to implement special safeguards for rural landowners, who understood the "peculiar circumstances" of the Frontier. [46]

Despite Maffey's warnings, the majority of the committee agreed that there was clearly a "strong and conscious desire" for reforms and the time had come for "liberal institutions" in the NWFP. These reforms would be incremental, however. Rather than the introduction of the Montagu-Chelmsford policy of dyarchy, in which Indian ministers controlled portfolios such as education and agriculture, the reforms on the Frontier would be relatively mild, with the creation of a Legislative Council. The Bray Committee suggested a council with an elected majority of 60% and special representation reserved for the large landowning Khans. In view of the "hot-headedness" of the Pathans, the committee felt that special representation for the Khans was essential, so that the "introduction of democratic institutions" did not undermine the influence of conservative

[45] Report of the North-West Frontier Enquiry Committee.

[46] Interview with Sir John Maffey, Chief Commissioner, NWFP, North-West Frontier Enquiry Committee.

tribal leaders in the administered districts. The report also called for unspecified "all-India" safeguards to be provided in an amendment to the Government of India Act 1919.[47]

The Bray Committee's thoroughly conservative recommendations offered elements of representative government and minimal concessions, but guaranteed British control over the levers of power. Moreover, the committee had defeated the move to re-amalgamate the settled districts with the Punjab. Had this taken place, the settled districts would have enjoyed all the fruits of Montagu-Chelmsford as part of the Punjab. It also would have possibly placed this region in the clutches of Indian nationalist politicians, something the British wished to avoid at all costs. Yet despite the conservative nature of the Bray's proposals, Reading chose to reject them and suppress the publication of the Report.[48] Reforms were once again shelved.

THE FRONTIER AND THE SIMON COMMISSION

Compared to the tumult of the early 1920s, the middle years of the decade were decidedly tranquil in an India exhausted by war and political upheaval. On the Frontier, the Government's forward policy in Waziristan pushed steadily forward, with small skirmishes here and there, but nothing on the level of 1919-22. Political strife in the administered districts all but disappeared as the Government used its wide powers under the Frontier Crimes Regulation to exile or imprison any nationalist "agitators." But despite this localized calm, the issue of reforms on the Frontier grew increasingly important to All-Indian politics. After the alliance that accompanied the Non-Cooperation movement, the 1920s witnessed a growing political polarization between India's Hindus and Muslims.[49] By mid-decade, a number of All-Indian Muslim politicians began calling for the extension of reforms to the NWFP so that this Muslim majority province could

[47] Report of the North-West Frontier Enquiry Committee.

[48] L.F. Rushbrook Williams, *India in 1925-26: A Statement Prepared for Presentation to parliament in Accordance with the Requirements of the 26th Section of the Government of India Act (5&6 Geo. V, Chap. 61* (Calcutta: Government of India Press, 1927), p. 107.

[49] See David Page, *Prelude to Partition: Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control, 1920-1932* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

serve as a counterweight against what they saw as Hindu domination.[50] Likewise, overt Hindu nationalists, like Madan Mohan Malaviya argued against reforms, citing tribal attacks upon the NWFP's Hindu minority as proof that the Frontier was too backwards for reforms.[51] Shades of this split had been present in Bray's Committee, which had divided upon communal lines.

The question of reforms in the NWFP was reopened in 1926, when a Muslim member for Madras, Maulvi Syed Murtaza Bahadur, brought up the issue in the Indian Legislative Assembly. A member of the Swaraj Party, Murtaza pointedly declared that he passed the resolution not as a Swarajist but "as a member of the All-India Muslim League."[52] Arguing that his resolution was based on the Bray Committee's proposals, Murtaza told the assembly that it was simply a question of granting "elementary rights" to the inhabitants of the Frontier. Murtaza's speech was followed by Nawab Sahibzada Sir Abdul Qaiyum, the future Chief Minister of NWFP, and one of the province's two members in the Central Legislature.[53] Reflecting the views of the province's large landowning Khans – the group which Maffey had sought to bolster – Abdul Qaiyum stated that although he had little confidence in the benefits of reform, he believed that the Frontier should be treated like the rest of India. He therefore supported the motion.

Sir Denys Bray, who as Indian Foreign Secretary had an official seat in the assembly, fought the motion. He argued that the Frontier must remain an all-Indian concern, to be dealt with by the Viceroy in Council. It could not be treated "parochially

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[50] In the 1920s, Muslims comprised 91.6% of the settled districts (Report of the North-West Enquiry Committee). In May 1924 the All-Indian Muslim League passed a resolution insisting upon "the immediate and paramount necessity of introducing reforms in the N.W.F. Province and of placing the province in all respects in a position of equality with the other major provinces of India" (Rittenberg, *Ethnicity*, p. 50).

[51] Note by Donald Gladding (Home Department, Government of India): Compilation of Assembly Debates on Grant of Reforms in the NWFP, 6 June 1930, National Archives of India (NAI), HOME (POL.) F. 318/1930.

[52] The Swaraj Party was set up in 1923 after leading members of Congress, including Motilal Nehru and Vallahbhai Patel, declared the non-cooperation movement had failed and decided that the time had come to contest elections under the Montagu-Chelmsford Constitution. With Congress's adoption of Civil Disobedience in 1929 the Swarajists boycotted the legislatures and fully reintegrated themselves with the Congress Party ("Swaraj Party" in Parshotam Mehra, *A Dictionary of Modern Indian History, 1707-1947* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 704-707).

[53] The other MLA from NWFP was Muhammad Akbar Khan. Although the province sent two members to the Legislature in Delhi and Simla, the members were nominated by the Chief Commissioner. In the Montagu-Chelmsford provinces, the representatives were elected.

but imperially." He sought to use the communal divide to his advantage, stating that the assembly would have to "eschew light and easy decisions which communal or other biases may…suggest."[54] For the time being, the communal aspect of the Frontier reforms debate offered a strong wedge for the British and they encouraged this division. Veteran nationalists like Madan Mohan Malaviya spoke out against the extension of reforms, and the issue contributed to a further deterioration of Hindu-Muslim unity in the Swaraj Party, something the British had fully anticipated and now welcomed.[55] Yet this tactic lost its edge in the late 1920s as most "Hindu" nationalist leaders, such as Motilal Nehru, realized that since the Frontier was part of India, consistency demanded that Congress support the call for reforms there. In the report he submitted to the All-Parties Conference in late 1928, Nehru officially endorsed reforms, a move confirmed by the Congress Party as a whole.[56] The British continued to play the communal card but, for the time being at least, it was a losing hand.[57]

The British were also wary of manipulating the subcontinent's Muslims. Ever since 1857 the British viewed India's Muslims as, paradoxically, both the bulwark of the Army in India, and as a potential fifth column, ready to rise and expel their imperial masters at a moment's notice.[58] By 1926-27 the administration was troubled by Muslim outrage at the lack of reforms on the Frontier. Although the resolutely Conservative Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead, believed that the extension of reforms to the NWFP was "probably impossible for many years to come" the new Viceroy, Lord

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[54] *Indian Central Legislative Assembly Debates*, 16 February 1926, pp. 1326.

[55] See Note by Gladding, 6 June 1930. In the yearbook covering the 1926 Delhi sitting of the Assembly, Rushbrook Williams, the Government's Director of Public Information wrote that the NWFP resolution was "the most important of the session" as it "provided the conditions for another split in the Swarajist Party, namely a Hindu-Muslim split" (*India in 1925-26*, p. 105).

[56] This is clear, for example, in the Nehru Report (1928). See All Parties Conference, *Report of the Committee appointed by the Conference to Determine the Principles of the Constitution for India: Together with a Summary of the Proceedings of the Conference Held at Lucknow* (Allahabad: All India Congress Committee, 1928).

[57] Note by Gladding, 6 June 1930.

[58] See, for instance, Tan Tai Yong, *The Garrison State: Military, Government and Society in Colonial Punjab, 1849-1947* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, Ltd., 2005). On British India's schizophrenic view of Muslims see Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) and David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation" Muslim Solidarity in British India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), Chapter Two; and W.W. Hunter, B.A., LL.D., *The Indian Musalmans*, 3rd Edition (London: Trubner and Co., 1876).

Irwin, believed that some action must be taken.[59] Irwin told Birkenhead that if the Government continued to "shelve the question" the "reaction on Moslem opinion in India may be serious and may cause us trouble."[60]

There was another reason for the Government of India to reassess its approach to the NWFP: the Indian Statutory Commission. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms included a provision for a commission to investigate the progress of the reforms and what, if any, further steps should be taken in India's constitutional advance after a period of ten years. A plotter to his core, Birkenhead believed that by the time this commission was inaugurated in 1929, the Labour Party would likely have a majority in the House of Commons. This he could not allow. Birkenhead opposed any further "concessions" to Indian nationalists. A contemporary remarked, with a great deal of truth, that "[Birkenhead] would like to take back everything that has been done in India since Montagu, or perhaps since Macaulay."[61] In order to deny a Labour government the ability to appoint a commission prone to make concessions, he jumped the gun and appointed a Conservative majority Indian Statutory Commission in 1927.[62] The commission, presided over by the serpentine lawyer and Liberal MP, Sir John Simon, included no Indians, a decision that enraged Indian nationalists.[63] Although the Viceroy was a very different creature from his Secretary of State, Irwin agreed to this

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[59] Secretary of State (Birkenhead) to Viceroy (Irwin), 18 November 1926, Halifax Papers (IOR) C152/2. For Irwin's Viceroyalty see S. Gopal, *The Viceroyalty of Lord Irwin, 1926-1931*(Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1957), and J. Coatman, *The Years of Destiny: India, 1926-1932* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1932). For biographies of both Irwin and Birkenhead see F.W. Smith, Earl of Birkenhead, *Frederick Edwin, Earl of Birkenhead: The Last Phase* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1935); and F.W. Smith, Earl of Birkenhead, *Halifax: The Life of Lord Halifax* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966).

[60] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 19 May 1927, Halifax Papers (IOR) C152/3.

[61] Geoffrey Dawson (Editor of *The Times*) to Irwin, 14 November 1929, Halifax Papers (IOR) C152/18/304.

[62] Brown, *Modern India*, p. 251. See also Carl Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire: The British Conservative Party and the 1935 Constitution* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishing, 1986). Birkenhead was correct, Labour, under Ramsay MacDonald, formed the next British government in June 1929.

[63] The Commission included a single Liberal (Sir John Simon), four Conservatives (Lord Burnham, Edward Cadogan, Colonel George Lane-Fox, and Lord Strathcona) and two Labourites (Clement Attlee and Vernon Hartshorn). Although he was a Liberal, Simon had recently endeared himself to Conservatives through his uncompromising antipathy to Labour during the 1926 General Strike (See Bridge, *Holding India*, p. 20). One of Simon's detractor once described him as "a snake in snake's clothing" (Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918-1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 75).

arrangement, following the old Conservative Party tactic of making gradual reforms before their opponents fomented revolution.[64]

Irwin followed this line in his views on Frontier reform. He believed that the Government could shed this "perpetual source of embarrassment" by introducing a new scheme for "conservative and prudent" reforms in the NWFP before a Statutory Commission made more liberal recommendations. Ever cautious, the Viceroy worried that introducing reforms might be seen as indefensible when they "were on the threshold of the investigation" by the Commission.[65] Nevertheless, he moved forward. Irwin discussed reforms with Sir Norman Bolton, who replaced Maffey as Chief Commissioner of the NWFP following the latter's resignation in 1923. Bolton was opposed to most reforms but endorsed the creation of a legislative council along the lines of those inaugurated by the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909.[66] Wary of any change on the Frontier, the Viceroy's Council failed to agree even to this backwards looking proposal.[67]

Simon's Indian Statutory Commission arrived in India in February 1928. The Commission's omission of Indian members led to a mass boycott by both Congress and the Muslim League.[68] Dogged by protests every step of the way, the Commission carried out their tour all the same. After a brief return to England, the Commission visited the Frontier in November. In preparation for this, Irwin drew up guidelines for Bolton's discussion with the Commission. In the wake of the All-Parties Conference (Congress, Muslim League, etc.) resolution in favor of full reforms in the NWFP, the Viceroy believed that "the Pathan will not tolerate much longer being treated as more backward" than the rest of India. The status quo could not stand. Irwin proposed that a number of

[64] Irwin disliked Birkenhead. Following the latter's early death from the effects of alcoholism in September 1930, the Viceroy wrote to Wedgwood Benn, the Secretary of State for India: "I cannot pretend that I should ever have been able to feel the affection of personal friendship for him, as our whole points of view were fundamentally antipathetic…He has certainly complicated our task here by the roughness of touch which he brought to it. Still, *de mortuis*…" (Viceroy to Secretary of State, 13 September 1930, Halifax Papers (IOR) C152/6).

[65] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 24 November 1926, Halifax Papers C152/2.

[66] Notes of a Conversation between Sir Horatio (Norman) Bolton and Lord Winterton (Under Secretary of State for India) at Peshawar, 22 January 1927, (IOR) L PO 5/24A. For a description of the "Morley-Minto" Reforms see Brown, *Modern India*, pp. 148-152.

[67] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 19 May 1927.

[68] See S.R. Bakshi, *Simon Commission and Indian Nationalism* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1977).

liberal measures be taken, including the establishment of a legislature with the "power to make laws and vote supplies."[69]

Faced with mounting criticism, the Government of India softened its approach, but the Frontier administration remained opposed to most reforms. In his interview with the "Joint Committee," which included the Simon Commission members and Indian "auxiliaries" known as the Indian Central Committee, Bolton made clear his hostility to reforms.[70] While he reiterated his support for a powerless "talking shop" council on the Morley-Minto model, Bolton did not contemplate "the introduction of any element of responsibility" since this would weaken the executive, a dangerous move in the NWFP. The elected element in this weak and ineffectual council might make up 50% of its members, but within this group there should be special constituencies for landholders and retired army officers. When an Indian member reminded him that the Bray Committee of 1922, of which Bolton was a member, went much further in its recommendations, the Chief Commissioner said that "further reflections," combined with unspecified "experience now gained of the working dyarchical system elsewhere," led him to alter his opinion. Ironically, in an area of India where the British much lamented the "democratic instinct" of the population, Bolton felt that the it would be more appropriate if the constitutional "development of the province should proceed more on autocratic or oligarchic than on democratic lines."[71]

When pressed by Sir Zulfiqar Ali Khan, an Indian member of the "Joint Committee", as to why democratic reforms should be avoided, Bolton said that his "personal enquiries convinced him that the ordinary villager was indifferent as to the introduction of reforms." Citing the old and outdated argument against further reforms

[69] Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 8 October 1928, (IOR) L P&S 12/3135.

[70] The Indian Central Committee consisted of members of the Central Legislative Assembly who had chosen to cooperate with Simon's Commission. It included Sir Sankaran Nair, Sir Hari Singh Gour, Sir Arthur Froom, Dr. Abdullah Suhrawardy, Sir Kikibai Premchand, Nawab Ali Khan, Sardar Singh Oberoi, Sir Zulfiqar Ali Khan, and M.C. Rajah. The records of the Commission show that these individuals often took a leading part when interviewing witnesses, yet they had little to no involvement in the actual drafting of Simon's report (See Simon Papers F77). Instead the Central Committee published a separate report in 1929 (See Sir C. Sankaran Nair, *Report of the Indian Central Committee, 1928-29* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1929)).

[71] Summary of the Views Expressed to the Joint Conference by the Hon. Sir H. N. Bolton, KCIE, CSI, ICS, Chief Commissioner, NWFP, 20 November 1928, Simon Papers F77/47.

throughout India, the Chief Commissioner asserted that the only groups interested in constitutional advancement were the "unrepresentative" educated classes in urban areas.[72] He argued that although the large landowning Khans were interested in some reforms, they were divided over the extent to which changes should be made.[73] Yet the Khans wanted reform; a deputation from this group assured the Commission that they were deeply interested in reforms containing "progressive elements" similar to those granted on other provinces.[74] Moreover, villagers especially in Peshawar district, were also were increasingly interested in reforms.[75]

At this point, however, the British introduced a new element into the debate over reforms and the Frontier, one that had All-Indian significance. After the doldrums of the mid 1920s, Indian nationalism once again picked up steam in 1928-29, inspired in large part by outrage over the Simon Commission's exclusively British membership. In reaction, a committee chaired by Motilal Nehru carried out its own investigation and published a report calling for immediate Dominion Status, a motion endorsed in August by the All-Parties Conference.[76] Politics were rapidly outpacing Simon's "review" of the 1919 Reforms. In light of these developments, the Indian administration searched for arguments to stem the tide. The British military, opposed to Indianization and Indian home rule, focused on the Frontier.[77] In their interviews with the Simon Commission, Indian Army officers added imperial and All-Indian concerns to the provincial anxieties voiced by Bolton.

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[72] See, for example, Interview with Muhammad Aurangzeb Khan, B.A., LL.B, 28 March 1928, Simon Papers (IOR) F77/132.

[73] Summary of the Views Expressed to the Joint Conference by the Hon. Sir H. N. Bolton.

[74] Representation from the Khans, NWFP, to Simon Commission, No Date, Simon Papers F77/49.

[75] See Chapter Three.

[76] See *Report of the Committee appointed by the Conference to Determine the Principles of the Constitution for India*.

[77] Before the 1920s Indians in the Indian Army were not allowed to become full officers. They received "Viceroy's Commissions," rather than the "King's Commissions" enjoyed by European officers. This meant that they could never command a regiment or enjoy many of the other privileges of rank – including the European officer's mess. "Indianization" literally meant the extension of King's Commissions to Indians. See Chapter Eight of Pradeep Barua's *Gentlemen of the Raj: The Indian Army Officer Corps, 1817-1949* (Westport: Praeger, 2003).

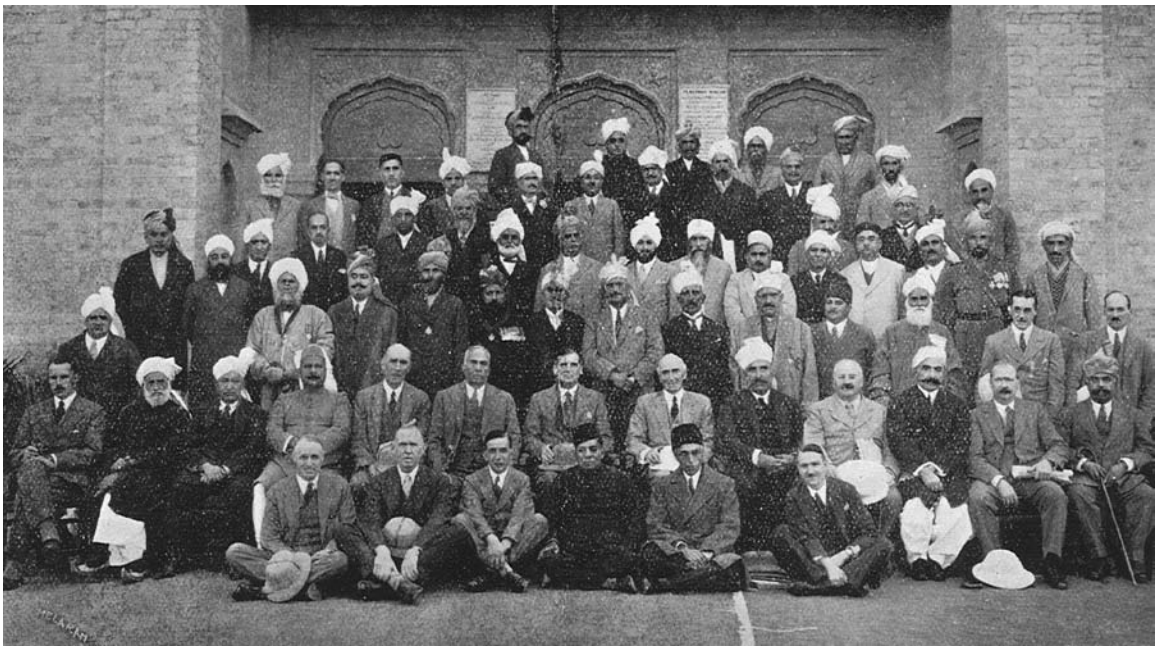

Illustration 3: The Combined Indian Statutory Commission and India Central Committee at Peshawar, 1928. Sir Norman Bolton, the Chief Commissioner, NWFP, sits at the center of the second row (khaki topi on lap), flanked by the heads of the two committees, Sir Sankaran Nair and Sir John Simon.[78]

In the 1920s the Government of India latched on to the idea that Indian politicians were not prepared for the weighty responsibility of Frontier defence, and by extension, the security of India. The Government of India's parliamentary report for 1919 stated:

> There is a tendency on the part of educated India to treat the defence of India and particularly the defence of the North-West Frontier, as being rather a matter for the British administration than for the Indian people. As to the reason for this attitude, it would be easy to hazard an explanation; but the fact remains that unless this attitude be modified…there is some danger lest Indian administrators, when they find themselves in power, should be inclined to underestimate the necessity of safeguarding adequately the gates of India.[79]

Privately, British officers and administrators admitted a strong cynicism in employing this argument. Lord Rawlinson of Trent, the Indian Commander-in-Chief from 1920 to

[78] Reproduced from Obhrai, *The Evolution of North-West Frontier Province*, opp. p. 124.
[79] *India in 1919*, p. 19.

1925, saw the argument as a useful arrow in the imperial quiver. Writing to a colleague in Egypt, he remarked:

> Here in India we can always play off the Afghan menace against the Indian agitator when he squeals for complete Indianization and pure Self-Government. If we threaten to take away the British Army, he fully realizes that he will be eaten up by an Afghan cum Mohammedan invasion. Therefore, he wishes to keep the British Army for his own self protection.[80]

No doubt this attitude continued in some quarters into the late 1920s, but the very real concerns about the Soviet Union and political conditions in Afghanistan gave this argument genuine credence in this period. Attacks by Indian politicians, who argued that there was no external threat to India, only Frontier "bogeys" created by the British in order to oppress India, further convinced many within the administration that their case held water.[81]

Writing to Sir John Simon, the Indian Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Lord Birdwood, reminded the Commission that the "extent of the problem of military defence" on the North-West Frontier was "without parallel elsewhere in the Empire, and constitutes a difficulty in developing self-government which never arose in the case of the other dominions."[82] The security concerns on the Frontier were further complicated by its Pathan population. The Deputy Chief of the Indian General Staff argued that a self-governing India would find it difficult to "set the Pathan tribes wholeheartedly" on their side, which would be particularly troublesome if an outside invader was European, such as the Soviets.[83]

The Army's decision to raise the Bolshevik menace was well timed. Whereas authorities in London and Delhi had given little thought to the Soviet Empire beyond the Pamirs in the mid 1920s, by the end of the decade they were once again alarmed at the prospect of Bolshevik "intrigue", or even invasion, in Afghanistan and the tribal areas.

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[80] Lord Rawlinson of Trent (Commander-in-Chief, India) to Lt.-General Sir Walter Congreve, 3 April 1923, in Mark Jacobsen (ed.), *Rawlinson in India* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2002), p. 152.

[81] Speech by C.S. Ranga Iyer in excerpts from *Indian Central Legislative Assembly Debates*, 14 March 1928, L P&S 12/3135.

[82] Field Marshal Lord Birdwood to Sir John Simon with enclosed General Staff Memorandum, 15 March 1929, Simon Papers F77/55.

[83] Interview with Major-General W.M. St. G. Kirke, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., 22 March 1929, Kirke Papers (IOR) E396/18.

This upsurge in fear stemmed from three specific issues. First, there was the Russo-Afghan crisis of late 1926, when the Soviets seized a disputed island in the River Oxus, which the Afghans had possessed *de facto* for many years.[84] Second, the Afghan Amir Amanullah was intent on building a modern army and air force and, despite his ongoing disagreement with the Russians, he had employed Soviet advisors to help him construct his air force.[85] Finally, in London at least, this sudden concern about the Soviets was linked to wider anxieties connected to the British General Strike of May 1926. Birkenhead, for instance, only brought the potential for a Russian invasion of India to Irwin's attention in the immediate aftermath of the strike.[86]

Although the high level discussions in Delhi and London concluded that it was highly unlikely that the Soviet Union possessed the organization and ability to launch a land invasion of India, it was highly probable that they could and would launch an invasion of Afghanistan. If the Soviets succeeded in setting up a hostile Afghan regime then "the tribes of the Frontier" would be against the British "to a man," and "a military situation of the greatest gravity would be inevitable."[87] Several members of British Government's sub-committee on Indian Defence, including Winston Churchill, Field Marshal Sir Claud Jacob, and Lord Salisbury – all of whom were violently opposed to Indian constitutional reform – suggested a preemptive invasion of Afghanistan. Cooler heads, such as Sir Samuel Hoare and the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin prevailed, however, and the suggestion was dropped.[88] Fears of a Soviet invasion of Afghanistan lessened in 1928 and 1929 after the Russians gave back the disputed Afghan island and Amanullah was overthrown in late 1928. Nevertheless, the Bolshevik menace remained

[84] Report of the Defence of India Sub-Committee, Committee of Imperial Defence, 26 January 1928, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA) CAB 16/83.

[85] Despatch No. 9 from the Government of India to the Secretary of State for India, 7 October 1926, CAB 16/83.

[86] Secretary of State to Viceroy, 10 June 1926, Halifax Papers C152/2.

[87] Testimony of General Sir Andrew Skeen, Committee of Imperial Defence: Minutes of the Fifth Meeting of the Defence of India Sub-Committee, 10 May 1927, CAB 16/83; and Appreciation of the Military Situation in the Event of War with Russia in Central Asia by the Indian General Staff, March 1927, CAB 16/83.

[88] Committee of Imperial Defence: Minutes of the 223rd Meeting, 17 March 1927, CAB 16/83. See also Memorandum by Field Marshal Sir Claud Jacob, on Government of India Despatches Nos. 9 and 10, 29 November 1926, CAB 16/83.

firmly rooted in the psyche the Indian Army as Simon made his progress through the subcontinent.[89]

The military's attempt to introduce Frontier defence as a wedge issue on Indian home rule made a deep impression on the Simon Commission. The argument, when combined with the Frontier administration's statements on the dangers of local reforms, served to put a brake on both on the extension of reforms to the Frontier and on the progress of Indian self-government. Somehow the North-West Frontier needed to be placed out of bounds. In a note to his fellow commission members, Simon wrote that border raids, the influence of local religious leaders over the "fanatical and ignorant tribesmen," and the "risk of threatening movements on a larger scale in Central Asia," made the issue of reforms on the Frontier an All-India problem. Although he "sympathized" with those who argued that the best way to encourage "greater respect for law" among the Pathan was to treat them as responsible citizens, he had many reservations. Although the peoples of the North-West Frontier could not be "permanently denied their share in the constitutional advantages" enjoyed by the rest of India, the region was, due to its strategic and communal position, different. Simon therefore recommended the continuation of strong British control over the region.[90]

The Simon Commission wrapped up its investigation in the spring of 1929 and returned to Britain to write their report. The section on reforms in the NWFP was entrusted to the Labour member and future Prime Minister, Clement Attlee (still universally known as "Major Attlee"). Although Attlee was a liberal on Indian issues and the man who presided over Britain's relinquishing of its Indian empire in 1947, his draft recommendations – which were accepted in full – were remarkably conservative.[91] Attlee

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[89] Although the concerns about a Soviet invasion were driven by London, the Government of India possessed its own fair share of Communist paranoia. A case in point is the Meerut Communist Conspiracy Trials that were going on at this time (see Lester Hutchinson, *Conspiracy at Meerut* (New York: Arno Press, 1972); and Pramita Ghosh, *Meerut Conspiracy Case & the Left-Wing in India* (Chicago: Papyrus, 1978).

[90] Note on the NWFP by Sir John Simon, 20 November 1928, Simon Papers F77/49.

[91] See Indian Statutory Commission, *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, Vol. II, *Recommendations* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1930), pp. 101-107. On Attlee and the Indian Empire see R.J. Moore, *Escape from Empire: The Attlee Government and the Indian Problem* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

gave weight to Bolton's argument that the common man had little interest in reforms, writing that neither he nor his colleagues believed that that reform was "desired by the majority of the population." Instead, the commission members were convinced (not without reason) that many of the calls for a new system on the Frontier was motivated by "Mahomedans" who wished to increase their All-Indian strength by establishing another Muslim-majority self-governing province. Although this was a "natural" desire it did not mean that the British should acquiesce.[92]

The paramount concern, however, was the Frontier's strategic position. Attlee followed the Bray Committee's assertion that the ultimate object of Britain's whole Frontier policy was the security of India. In dealing with the fraught constitutional issue of control of the Indian Army, the Simon Commission recommended that, as the defence of India was of concern to both India and the Empire as a whole, power over India's armed forces be transferred from the Government of India to the Viceroy personally. The North-West Frontier was the linchpin to the defence of India, since it alone in the Empire was "open to any serious threat of attack by land."[93] It would be therefore be impossible to separate the "control of the Army from the control of the area which forms the inevitable terrain for military operations in the defence of India." Those responsible for the defence of the Frontier would have to be responsible for the administration of the NWFP as well. Using an analogy that vexed nationalists throughout India, Attlee wrote:

> We are not insensible to the claims put forward by some witnesses that the inhabitants of this area are not less virile and intelligent than those in other provinces and that therefore it is unfair that their geographical position should prevent them from attaining the rights of self-government granted to others, but it is not possible to change the plain facts of the situation. The inherent right of a man to smoke a cigarette must necessarily be curtailed if he lives in a powder magazine. We cannot, therefore, recommend provincial autonomy and responsible govt. for the NWFP.[94]

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[92] Draft by Major Attlee on the Simon Commission's Recommendations for NWFP.

[93] See *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, Vol. II, *Recommendations*, pp. 167-180.

[94] Draft by Major Attlee on the Simon Commission's Recommendations for NWFP. For an example of the derision poured on this analogy see Maulana Allah Bukhsh Yusufi, *The Frontier Tragedy: An Account of the Inhuman Acts of Repression and Terrorism, Blockades, Loot, Incendiarism & Massacres – Through Which the People of the North-West Frontier Province Have Had to Go During the Present Disturbance* (Peshawar: All India Khilafat Committee, 1930).

The final version of the Simon Commission's report softened Attlee's language, but maintained his powder magazine analogy and his conclusions. The military's arguments had won over Attlee and the rest of the Commission. The defence of India precluded wide-ranging reforms on the Frontier.

Ultimately, the Commission's findings hewed to a line somewhere between the Bray Committee's 1922 recommendations, and the changes suggested by Bolton in 1928. Montagu-Chelmsford would not be extended to the province. Instead the settled districts of the NWFP would receive a form of the 1909 Morley-Minto reforms. The Frontier would be served by a Legislative Council, in which 50% of the members would be elected (Bray had suggested 60%); the electorate would be divided into special constituencies as Bolton and Maffey had suggested, with representation for the Khans and ex-military officers. The powers of the Council would be heavily curtailed with full executive authority remaining in the Chief Commissioner's hands. The Simon Commission's report insisted that "these recommendations represent an important advance."[95]

Yet it was too little, too late. At the moment that Attlee was drafting his recommendations the nationalist movement on the Frontier was rapidly growing.[96] When the dam of Pathan nationalism finally burst in 1930, the Government was forced to make concessions far larger than the Simon Commission's paltry offerings.

CONCLUSION

The period between 1919, when Gandhi launched his Non-Cooperation movement and 1930, when the Mahatma strode to Dandi on his Salt March, witnessed momentous changes in India. The Congress Party grew from a lawyers' talking shop to an increasingly popular national movement, and British rule in the subcontinent was challenged to a degree unseen since 1857. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms changed the way that the British administered their Indian Empire and provided a host of new

[95] See *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission,* Vol. II, *Recommendations*, pp. 101-107.
[96] See Chapter Three.

opportunities for Indians willing to collaborate with them.[97] Faced with new constraints, the Raj made gradual concessions.[98]

Throughout British India, the provinces received legislatures with elected majorities and Indian control over certain minor portfolios. The exception was the NWFP. In this period, the administered districts remained under the nearly autocratic control of a Chief Commissioner and the Government of India. British reluctance to extend reforms to the region was based on two assumptions: that the Pathan personality precluded a vigorous nationalist sentiment in favor of reform and, more importantly, that reforms could not operate in an area so strategically sensitive – numerous threats mandated a continuation of direct British rule. As Indian nationalism surged in the late 1920s with demands for the home rule or Dominion Status, the relationship between constitutional reform and the Frontier took on an additional dimension.[99] Dominion status would put British control of the Indian Army in jeopardy. Thus the intimate relationship between India's armed forces and the Frontier became a central argument against home rule, as observed in the proceedings and recommendations of the Simon Commission. The Simon Report concluded that the threats posed to the North-West Frontier menaced India's very existence, and since Indian politicians failed to grasp this elementary fact, they could not be trusted with the levers of power. This was doubly true for the NWFP, where security could not be sacrificed to the whims of an educated minority and Muslim communalists.

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[97] See Ronald Robinson, "Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration," in E. R. J. Owen and R. B. Sutcliffe, eds., *Studies in the Theories of Imperialism* (London, 1972).

[98] See John Gallagher and Anil Seal, "Britain and India Between the Wars," *Modern Asian Studies*, 15, 3 (1981), pp. 387-414, and Judith M. Brown, "Imperial Façade: Some Constraints Upon and Contradictions in the British Position in India, 1919-35," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 26, 5 (1976), pp. 35-52, and B.R. Tomlinson, *The Political Economy of the Raj, 1914-1947: The Economics of Decolonization in India* (London: Macmillan, 1979).

[99] By the late 1920s Dominion Status was understood by the following declaration hammered out by Lord Balfour at the Imperial Conference of 1926: "They are autonomous Communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations" (See Nicholas Mansergh, *The Commonwealth Experience* (New York: Praeger, 1969), p. 233).

In making these arguments, British officers and administrators attempted to remove the Frontier from the All-Indian equation of reform and constitutional advance, while simultaneously integrating the region into the larger debate about India's future. This strategy revealed the fundamental paradox of British thinking about the Frontier: that it was both an integral part of India and at the same time very different – a place removed. This contradiction could not hold, however, and events on the Frontier were rapidly moving beyond British control. Upheaval soon gripped the Frontier. To the surprise of the British the catalyst for this turmoil was neither the Soviets nor the Afghans nor the tribes. Instead the British were confronted by a new threat in the form of home grown nationalism.

CHAPTER THREE:
"A CONSIDERABLE DEGREE OF SUPINENESS": NATIONALISM, AND THE BRITISH ADMINISTRATION, 1928-1930

In early April 1930, the Viceroy of India, Lord Irwin, visited the North-West Frontier Province. Hosted by the Chief Commissioner of the province, Sir Norman Bolton, the tour appeared to be a success. Upon Irwin's return to Simla, Bolton wrote to the Viceroy, thanking him for his visit and commenting on the "tranquility" of the province, which he chalked up to the "level headed loyalty of the people."[1] Within a week of his letter to Irwin, the Frontier was ablaze. By the end of April the North-West Frontier had witnessed mass shootings in Peshawar, the occupation of the city by local nationalists, the mental collapse of the Chief Commissioner, a mutiny within the Indian Army, a revolt throughout the rural areas of the Peshawar District, and threatening noises from the trans-border tribes. By August, Irwin informed the Secretary of State for India that "the whole of Peshawar District…must be considered in [a] state of war."[2]

Throughout the previous decade, the Government of India, aided by the Frontier administration, had insisted that political reform was both unnecessary and unwise in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). Whereas the rest of India made important if limited gains in self-government with the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919, the Frontier Province was left out. The British argued that strategic concerns combined with the lack of nationalist sentiment among the Pathans precluded reforms in the NWFP.[3] These views appear to have blinded many within the administration to the fact that nationalism was in fact growing rapidly throughout the settled districts in the late 1920s. Insisting that the forces of nationalism were absent from the Frontier, the British were stunned by the outburst of nationalist sentiment in April of 1930.

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[1] Sir Norman Bolton, Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Viceroy, 19 April 1930, Halifax Papers, India Office Records (IOR), C152/24.

[2] Viceroy to Secretary of State (Wedgwood Benn), 11 August 1930, National Archives of India (NAI), HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930.

[3] See Chapter Three.

This chapter examines the British response to the growth of the nationalist movement on the Frontier between late 1928 and what was euphemistically called the "Peshawar Disturbances" of April 23rd, 1930. It then explores the events of April 23rd and the days immediately following. It argues that despite the fact that the All-Indian nationalist movement was gathering strength from 1928, parallel developments in the NWFP were consistently played down by the local administration.[4] This "considerable degree of supineness," as India's Foreign Secretary, Evelyn Howell, scathingly put it, stemmed from the British administration's preoccupation with external and tribal threats to the Frontier and the close-held belief that the vast majority of the province's inhabitants had little to no interest in reforms or political advance.[5] By the time the administration belatedly realized the depth of nationalist feeling in the province in April 1930, their ignorance of the nature of Frontier nationalism resulted in an overreaction of tragic proportions. Assuming nationalist crowds in Peshawar to be violent by dint of the fact that they were Pathan, officials and officers ordered military operations against the demonstrators, unleashing what the British referred to as the Peshawar riots and the nationalists called the Qissa Khwani massacre of April 23rd, 1930. The day's violence led to a breakdown in the administration, a mutiny within local units of the Indian Army, the evacuation of Peshawar, and the mental collapse of the Chief Commissioner, Sir Norman Bolton.

THE EMERGENCE OF FRONTIER NATIONALISM

Following the demise of the *Hijrat* and the Khilafat movement, the nationalist movement on the Frontier entered a dormant phase that lasted until the final years of the

[4] For the state of the All-Indian nationalist movement in this period, Congress's Non-Cooperation Movement and the British response see Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience: The Mahatma in Indian Politics, 1928-34* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Sarvepali Gopal, *The Viceroyalty of Lord Irwin* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957); R.J. Moore, *The Crisis of India Unity, 1917-1940* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974); and D.A. Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism: The Imprint of Ambiguity, 1929-1942* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Chapters One through Five.

[5] Note by E.B. Howell, 24 May 1930, (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 206/1930.

decade.[6] The failure of the *Hijrat* in particular convinced many in the rural areas that challenging the British administration was a fruitless enterprise. Indeed, the Government's hand was strengthened among the *muhajirin* by its efforts to help returning emigrants regain their land. [7]

The administration was further reinforced by the continued employment of the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR), a set of draconian laws unique to the NWFP and Baluchistan. The FCR granted the British administration vast powers over the population, including the power to jail and exile after only a cursory trial and collective punishment. The FCR also provided the Deputy Commissioner of any district the power to refer cases to *jirgas*, or tribal assemblies, rather than British courts.[8] Ostensibly meant to support *riwaj*, or customary law, this practice served to bolster the power of the administration's conservative interlocutors, the landowning Khans, who presided over these *jirgas* in the settled districts.[9] Thus the FCR denied the inhabitants of the Frontier the judicial system enjoyed by the rest of India.

When the Indian National Congress attempted to create a Frontier Congress Party in December 1920, the administration, using the FCR, jailed or exiled the organizers, effectively destroying the Congress in the province.[10] Among those arrested in this crackdown was Abdul Ghaffar Khan. The son of a prosperous landowning family in the Charsadda subdivision of the Peshawar District, Abdul Ghaffar had a spotty education at Edwardes College in Peshawar and a brief spell at the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental

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[6] *Report [With Evidence] of the Peshawar Enquiry Committee, Appointed by the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress* (Allahabad: Allahabad Law Journal Press, 1930), p. 4 (Hereafter "Patel Report").

[7] See Chapter Three.

[8] Despite the name, the Deputy Commissioner was the head of the district.

[9] See Report of the Frontier Regulations Enquiry Committee, 1931, (IOR) L P&S 12/3182. No longer used in the administered districts of the NWFP, the Frontier Crimes Regulation remains in force in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA). Considered an unalloyed success by many within the British administration, the veteran Political, Sir Henry Dobbs, extended a version of the FCR to Iraq (Tribal Criminal and Civil Disputes Regulations) where he served as High Commissioner in 1924 (Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 92).

[10] Interview with Deputy Commissioner, Bannu, North-West Frontier Enquiry Committee, (IOR) V/26/247/3. What was left of the local party was subsequently integrated into the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee in 1923.

College at Aligarh. Rather than join his older brother, Khan Sahib, who was in England gaining a medical degree, Abdul Ghaffar stayed in NWFP, becoming convinced of the need for social reform among Pathans immediately preceding World War I. Deeply involved with the *Hijrat*, Abdul Ghaffar journeyed to Kabul in autumn 1920, where he unsuccessfully pled the *muhajirin* case in front of the Amir Amanullah following the latter's decision to suspend emigration in August. Upon his return he served as president of the Provincial Khilafat Committee. Having been converted to the creed of Gandhian non-violence, he was also involved with the fledgling Congress organization. He was arrested in fall 1921 and sentenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment in December of that year.[11]

The British released Abdul Ghaffar in 1924 and he returned to his home village. Like many nationalists in the Frontier province, Abdul Ghaffar refrained from outright political activity in this period and instead focused on social reform and rural uplift. In particular, he threw himself into the work of an organization he and his fellow Charsadda nationalists founded prior to his incarceration: the *Anjuman-i-Islah-ul-Afaghania* (Society for the Reform of the Afghans), which ran a number of free schools. The goal of the Anjuman was to "cleanse society of bad customs; to create a real Islamic love and brotherhood amongst the people…to teach the Pakhtun nation their responsibility of serving Islam."[12] Abdul Ghaffar and his associates hoped that social reform would strengthen the "nation" and awaken a cultural revival as a first step in a wider nationalist struggle against British rule. In this they succeeded, and the 1920s witnessed a flowering of Pathan literature and culture.[13] Members of the Anjuman regarded British rule as the source of the economic and social problems bedeviling Pathan society. Thus the ultimate

[11] Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *My Life and Struggle: Autobiography of Badshah Khan as Narrated to K. B. Narang* (Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1969), p. 58. There are a number of hagiographies of this remarkable man. The best single biography, however, in D. G. Tendulkar's excellent *Abdul Ghaffar Khan: Faith is a Battle* (Bombay: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1967).

[12] Quote from the Anjuman's official publication, *Pakhtun*, October 1928, in Stephen Alan Rittenberg, *Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Pakhtuns: The Independence Movement in India's North-West Frontier Province* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1988), p. 70.

[13] Sir Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans, 550B.C.-A.D.1957* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1958), Chapter 26. Caroe called this the "Pathan Renascence" in literature and political awareness.

goal was the extinction of the British administration. As one member recalled: "without education it [would] be impossible to oppose the British."[14]

Some of the ills that Abdul Ghaffar and his allies hoped to eradicate from Pathan society were traditional problems, such as endemic feuding, but others were of a more recent vintage. As in the rest of India, British rule had led to massive changes in the ownership and cultivation of the land. In the settled districts, the traditional Pathan system of *shamilat* (common lands) was replaced by private ownership in the hands of the larger Khans, who supported the British administration. This led to a growing inequality within Pathan society, reducing previously independent cultivators to a subordinate condition. The discontent and resentment spawned by this growth in inequality galvanized smaller landowners into challenging the large Khans and their British patrons. As this group, which made up the foundation of Abdul Ghaffar's Anjuman, grew overtly nationalists by the late 1920s, they found willing followers among the shop-keepers and peasantry of the settled districts.[15] This economic dislocation was further exacerbated by the onset of the worldwide depression.[16]

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[14] Interview with unnamed Khudai Khidmatgar veteran in Mukulika Banerjee, *The Pathan Unarmed: Opposition &Memory in the North-West Frontier* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 53.

[15] Rittenberg, *Ethnicity*, Chapter Three. Rittenberg's study, though published in 1988, was based on a Columbia University dissertation he wrote in the 1970s, and is therefore the first major historical work on Frontier nationalism. Though he focuses primarily on the early 1930s and 1945-47, Rittenberg's work, which relies heavily on British sources, remains the only historical study to deal with the movement from its inception in the 1920s to the end of the British period. His assertion that nationalism in the NWFP was caused by the agricultural changes that triggered a societal earthquake in the settled districts, stands as the prevailing interpretation of the origins of the movement. The fact that the largest percentage of irrigated land and Khani held estates were in the Charsadda subdivision of the Peshawar District gives a great deal of credence to his argument, as this was to be the hotbed of nationalism throughout this era. For the nationalist movement on the Frontier also see Amit Kumar Gupta, *North-West Frontier Province Legislature and Freedom Struggle, 1932-47* (New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research, 1976); . Erland Jansen, *India, Pakistan or Pakhtunistan: The Nationalist Movements in the North-West Frontier Province, 1937-47* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 1981); Wiqar Ali Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam, and Nationalism: Muslim Politics in the North-West Frontier Movement, 1937-47* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Abdul Karim Khan, "The 'Khudai Khidmatgar' (Servants of God): Red Shirt Movement in the North-West Frontier Province of British India, 1927-1947" **(**University of Hawai'i Dissertation, 1997).

[16] See Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation in the NWFP for the Second Half of August 1929, (IOR) L P&J 12/9 and Note by Herbert Emerson (Home Secretary, Government of India), 26 May 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 206/1930. Already beset by poor harvests and heavy floods, the administration decided to raise the rural tax rate within the Peshawar District to 22% in early 1929 and inexplicably refused to lower it despite the collapse of agricultural prices.

In 1928, societal and economic grievances were joined by wider political concerns stemming from the outbreak of revolution and civil war in neighboring Afghanistan.[17] In July 1928, the Afghan king, Amanullah, decided to put his long-cherished dream of modernizing Afghan society into action.[18] Amanullah had carried out a number of nation-building reforms throughout his ten-year reign, including the modernization of Afghanistan's military, but he now went a step further. In a number of public speeches he called for the emancipation of Afghan women, urging them to follow his Queen's example and shed their veils. He outlawed polygamy, ordered that Afghan men should adopt western dress, and, critically, attacked the *Ulema*. The British feared that these policies would lead to the king's overthrow and political upheaval on the Afghan Frontier. The British Minister to Kabul, Sir Francis Humphrys, related an episode in which the exiled Amir of Bokhara, then resident in Kabul, was fined for publically wearing a turban rather than a Homburg. In light of these events, Humphrys worried that "a Gilbertian situation has been reached which may at any time be succeeded by a tragedy."[19]

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[17] The other major event of 1928 was the arrival of the Simon Commission in Peshawar. The Commission was met by a "very mild" demonstration of several hundred people shouting "Simon go back. Despite this relatively sedate reaction to the Commission, its presence nevertheless disturbed the Frontier's political status quo. The nationalist movement on the Frontier remained consumed by local rather than All-Indian concerns, and so Simon's presence failed to engender the heated debate over issues of independence, Dominion Status, and Home Rule, as it did elsewhere in India. But the Simon Commission did remind local nationalists of their fundamental grievance: the lack of reforms in the province. Emphasizing the relationship between autocratic British rule in the province and the complicity of the land-owning elites, the recently reconstituted Khilafat and Congress committees took the opportunity to condemn the lack of reforms (Fortnightly Report Extracts Compiled by E.B. Howell: 1928-1930, 24 May 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 206/1930). The local Congress and Khilafat Committees, which remained small, urban organizations, had essentially merged by this point. The national Khilafat Party, however, had, over the course of the 1920s, morphed into a Muslim communal organization. It was thus of little use on the Frontier and so the local party, while retaining the name, allied itself with the local Congress party (Rittenberg, *Ethnicity*, p. 75).

[18] For analysis of Amanullah's attempted modernization of Afghanistan, see Leon B. Poullada, *Reform and Rebellion in Afghanistan, 1919-1929: King Amanullah's Failure to Modernize a Tribal Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973). For Amanullah and his reign in general, consult Roland Wild, *Amanullah: Ex-King of Afghanistan* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1932), Rhea Talley Stewart, *Fire in Afghanistan, 1914-1929: Faith, Hope and the British Empire* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1973), and Abdul Ali Arghandawi, *British Imperialism and Afghanistan's Struggle for Independence, 1914-1921* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1989).

[19] Sir F. Humphrys to Lord Cushendun (Acting Foreign Secretary), 26 November 1928, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA), AIR 5/736. The first British minister to an Independent Afghanistan, Humphrys had spent his career on the North-West Frontier. His father-in-law was Sir Harold

Tragedy did indeed follow. By the end of October Humphrys reported that the army was discontent and the mullahs "openly hostile."[20] A tribal rebellion inspired by local Mullahs broke out in eastern Afghanistan in November and soon spread to Kabul.[21] Bereft of support, Amanullah withdrew to Kandahar.[22] He abdicated in January 1929 and left for India and exile in May.[23] In both the tribal belt and the administered districts, the Pathan population was keenly interested in political activities among their ethnic brethren in Afghanistan. Understandably, given Amanullah's stormy relationship with the British, many Pathans suspected a British hand in his downfall. Nationalists and religious leaders encouraged this view.[24] Amanullah's cause gained widespread support on the Frontier.[25] The local Khilafat and Congress committees, which had regrouped in the wake of Simon's visit to the Frontier, exploited these sympathies and organized protests in favor of Amanullah. These constituted the first major demonstrations in the province since the anti-Rowlatt protests in 1919.

Although Abdul Ghaffar Khan was a staunch supporter of Amanullah, whom he saw as a fellow Pathan nationalist, he was also deeply concerned for his fellow Pathans involved in the Afghan Civil War that followed Amanullah's abdication.[26] Abdul Ghaffar

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Deane, the first Chief Commissioner of the NWFP. Humphrys served as political agent in Waziristan during the First World War and Political Agent, Khyber, in the immediate aftermath of the war. He briefly served as deputy Indian Foreign Secretary before taking up his post at the Legation in Kabul. Following his retirement from the ICS in 1929 he succeeded another Frontier officer, Sir Henry Dobbs, as High Commissioner in Iraq.

[20] Humphrys to Cushendun, 22 October 1928, AIR 5/736.

[21] Humphrys to Government of India, 27 November 1928, TNA FO 371/13290. Tribesmen entered the city and threatened the British Legation. In February Humphrys decided to evacuate the Legation, prompting history's first airlift in which over 500 persons were flown out of Kabul in Victoria bombers (See Anne Baker, *Wings Over Kabul: The First Airlift* (London: Kimber, 1975)).

[22] Humphrys to Sir Austen Chamberlain (Foreign Secretary), 28 January 1929, (TNA) FO 371/13992.

[23] Foreign Department, Indian Office, Minute on Relations with Afghanistan, 1932, (IOR) L PO 5/23.

[24] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation of the NWFP for the First Half of April 1929, L P&J 12/9. British and Indian archives contain scant evidence for British collusion with Amanullah's many enemies. The British did not support Amanullah's reforms and Humphrys counseled the king to relent on them throughout this period, arguing that he had alienated both the army and the Ulema. The minister hoped that a policy retreat would preserve Amanullah's throne and prevent the chaos of a power vacuum. The British feared that this would lead to unrest among their own tribes. Moreover, they worried that the Soviets would take this opportunity to assert greater powers in Afghanistan (Humphrys to Government of India, 12 December 1928, FO 371/13290). For the British relationship with Amanullah and their fears of Soviet predation see Chapters One and Two.

[25] Viceroy to Secretary of State (Viscount Peel), 14 February 1929, FO 371/13992.

[26] Khan, *My Life and Struggle*, pp. 90-91.

organized a medical mission to Afghanistan under the auspices of the Red Crescent Society and began touring the province to solicit funds. In the course of this tour the activities of the Anjuman grew increasingly political, with Abdul Ghaffar making strong speeches in support of Amanullah.[27] The political temperature on the Frontier rose again in August when Abdul Ghaffar, who served as Congress vice-president, called for the establishment of a "Frontier Provincial Youth League" and support for the minuscule but Marxist *Anjuman-i-Naujawanan-i-Sarhad*, which had recently been established in Peshawar.[28]

Around this time Abdul Ghaffar founded the Frontier Provincial Youth League or "Afghan Jirga."[29] Drawing its leadership from the Anjuman, the Jirga was an overtly political organization with the declared object of complete independence for the Pathans and India as a whole.[30] While allied with Congress, Abdul Ghaffar was sure to make clear that the Afghan Jirga was an explicitly Pathan organization.[31] The organization grew quickly, aided in the autumn of 1929 by the Indian Central Legislature's passage of the Child Marriage Restraint, or Sarda, Act.[32] Although the Act placed the minimum age of marriage at 14 for girls and 16 for boys, the real concern in the NWFP, and not only "among those whose business it is to offer opposition to Government on all occasions," was that it would interfere with Shariah law. There was also a widespread rumor that the

[27] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation of the NWFP for the First Half of April 1929.

[28] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation of the NWFP for the Second Half of August 1929.

[29] See F.C. Isemonger, *The Frontier Provincial Youth League ("Suba Sarhad Zalmo Jirga") also known as The Afghan Jirga or the Annjuman of the Servants of God and its Organisation of Volunteers "The Khudai* Khidmatgaran" 1929-30, (IOR) L P&J 12/424.

[30] Express Letter from Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Home Department, Government of India, 12 June 1930, (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 11/III/1930.

[31] One member wrote that "most people in the villages do not understand the Khilafat and Congress…They think they are tricks and traps of the Indians." For this reason the Jirga did not integrate itself into any larger All-Indian organizations (Quote from *Pakhtun*, January 1930, in Rittenberg, *Ethnicity*, p. 76).

[32] For recent interpretations of the Sarda Act see Mrinali Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of India* (Durham: Duke University Press), chapter four; Mrinali Sinha, "The Lineage of the "Indian" Modern: Rhetoric, Agency, and the Sarda Act in Late Colonial India", in Antoinette Burton (ed.) *Gender, Sexuality and Colonial Modernities* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), p. 207-221; and Philippa Levine, "Sovereignty and Sexuality: Transnational Perspectives on Colonial Age of Consent Legislation" in Frank Trentman, Philippa Levine, and Kevin Grant (eds.) *Beyond Sovereignty: Britain, Empire and Transnationalism, 1860-1950* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 17-32.

Act would require the medical examination of Muslim brides by European physicians. This fear drew many devout Muslims into the nationalist fold.[33]

The Afghan Jirga continued to grow and soon established a quasi-military volunteer organization known as the Khudai Khidmatgars, or "Servants of God."[34] An odd marriage of military organization and Gandhian principles of non-violence, the Khudai Khidmatgars wore purplish-red clothing which was cheap to dye and disguised dirt, earning them the sobriquet "Red Shirts" from the British.[35] The nationalist movement grew apace through the winter of 1930 and Abdul Ghaffar made extensive lecture tours throughout Peshawar District.[36] Events were rapidly leading towards confrontation.

Despite this growth in political activity, the Frontier administration continued to indulge in "wishful thinking."[37] As early as January 1927, the Chief Commissioner, Sir Norman Bolton, was aware of the "growing discontent with Government on the part of the inhabitants of the province," yet he took few steps to address possible grievances. He chalked these feeling up to the dearth of essential services in the NWFP, over which he exercised little control, as it was a "deficit province."[38] Bolton, who had been at his post since 1923, had spent his entire career on the Frontier. Like many British administrators he believed that he "knew" the people of the Frontier far better than any nationalist "agitator." His sincere belief that the people in the villages had no desire for reforms or inkling towards nationalism appears to have blinded him to the growing wave of unrest.[39]

Bolton's denial was shared by many in the Frontier administration. Examining Bolton's Fortnightly Reports from the previous three years in May 1930, the Indian

[33] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation for the First Half of October 1929, L P&J 12/9. The fact that Congress sponsored the Sarda Act was inexplicably ignored. This was a source of constant frustration to the British (see Communiqué from Herbert Emerson, 5 May 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 11/III/1930.

[34] Express Letter from Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Home Department, Government of India, 12 June 1930.

[35] See Banerjee for discussion of the principle of non-violence among the Khudai Khidmatgars.

[36] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation for the First Half of February 1930, L P&J 12/20.

[37] Note by E.B. Howell, 24 May 1930.

[38] Notes of a Conversation between Sir Horatio (Norman) Bolton and Lord Winterton (Under Secretary of State for India) at Peshawar, 22 January 1927, (IOR) L PO 5/24A. Much of the Frontier's budget was supplied by the central exchequer.

[39] Summary of the Views Expressed to the Joint Conference by the Hon. Sir H. N. Bolton, KCIE, CSI, ICS, Chief Commissioner, NWFP, 20 November 1928, Simon Papers (IOR) F77/47.

Foreign Secretary and former Frontier Officer, Evelyn Howell, wrote of the entire administration:

> The facts, or at any rate, many facts, are reported, but there is no trace of any effort to coordinate them or to appreciate their real significance, and nothing, or very little, is said of counter measures. Nor is attention drawn to the way in which the Congress succeeds in gradually extending its control over all the organizations of which mention is made. There is a marked tendency towards optimism whenever any favourable circumstance occurs, and to drift on, clutching at straws.[40]

Howell believed that the threat had been consistently downplayed. Despite the fact that political meetings grew immense in 1929-1930, the administration remained convinced that there was nothing to worry about. In September 1929, for instance, Bolton endorsed the view of Peshawar's Deputy Commissioner, Aubrey Metcalfe, that the "general public are unaffected by this flood of oratory."[41] They also emphasized nationalist weaknesses, such as an apparent split in the Peshawar Congress Committee.[42]

The only aspect of Frontier nationalism that that administration seemed concerned about was the Marxist *Anjuman-i-Naujawanan-i-Sarhad*, despite its small membership and lack of support outside of Peshawar city. Since the British remained convinced that the real threat on the Frontier was external – Afghanistan, trans-frontier tribes, and Soviet Russia – rather than internal, it was natural that Bolton and his subordinates focused on what appeared to be a Soviet front organization. A relatively innocuous organization of "the youth of the province, of labourers and peasants against the curse of capitalists and imperialism," it was the only party who the British seriously discussed prosecuting, due to its "frankly communist and revolutionary" nature.[43] In the midst of these discussions, Abdul Ghaffar was essentially building an army with his Khudai Khidmatgars at this time, Bolton's reports to the Viceroy utterly ignored this, focusing instead on the Naujawan's use of "sickle and hammer" emblems during demonstrations.[44]

Some within the administration appear to have been aware of the deep discontent within the province. Sir Olaf Caroe, who had been serving as Deputy Commissioner in

[40] Note by E.B. Howell, 24 May 1930.
[41] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation for the Second Half of September 1929, L P&J 12/9.
[42] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation for the Second Half of October 1929.
[43] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation for the Second Half of September 1929; and Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation for the Second Half of January 1930.
[44] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation for the First Half of February 1930.

Kohat, returned to Peshawar in late 1929 to take up the post of secretary to the Chief Commissioner. Caroe recalled being surprised by the "groundswell" of opposition to the Government in the district and thinking that neither Bolton nor the Deputy Commissioner for Peshawar, Metcalfe, "was taking the measure of this movement."[45] One of the few Frontier officers who certainly did "take the measure" of the nationalist movement was the Resident in Waziristan, Lt. Colonel C.E. Bruce. In what was possibly the only warning offered to the central government by a member of the NWFP administration, Bruce wrote George Cunningham, a Frontier Officer and future Governor of the NWFP, who was then serving as Lord Irwin's Private Secretary, in February 1929. Cunningham enjoyed a close personal and working relationship with the Viceroy.[46] Yet, he admitted to Bruce, "I was rather perturbed about what you say about things going wrong in the NWFP…I had heard nothing about it before." Cunningham added that as far as the Frontier was concerned, the Viceroy and his government were fixated on the civil war in Afghanistan.[47]

After months of ignoring this groundswell, Bolton finally grew alarmed at the vast array of political activity taking place in the province in early April 1930.[48] In Peshawar, demonstrations against the Sarda Act continued unabated and violently anti-Government pamphlets were confiscated.[49] In Peshawar district, parallel courts were being established and tax revenue was drying up.[50] For the first time, the Chief

[45] Unpublished Caroe Memoirs, Caroe Papers (IOR) F203/79. Metcalfe's insouciant attitude towards the nationalist movement may have been related to the fact that he was, as his former subordinate, K.P.S. Menon, put it: "not one of the world's workers." Menon, a future Foreign Minister of India and one of only one or two Hindu Indians in the Political Service in the 1930s, genuinely liked Metcalfe, but noted that his work day consisted of mornings only, and not even mornings on Monday and Thursday when he rode to the Peshawar hounds (see K.P.S. Menon, *Many Worlds: An Autobiography* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 92).

[46] See Norval Mitchell, *Sir George Cunningham: A Memoir* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, Ltd., 1968), Chapter Three.

[47] Letter from George Cunningham to C.E. Bruce, 14 February 1929, Bruce Papers (IOR) F163/20.

[48] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation for the First Half of April 1930, L P&J 12/20.

[49] *Inqilab Zindabad* [Long Love Revolution]*: The Only Communist Weekly Paper of the Frontier Province* (Published by the *Naujawan Sarfarosh*), 25 March 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 11/III/1930. Also see Express Letter from Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Home Department, Government of India, 12 June 1930.

[50] Unpublished Caroe Memoirs.

Commissioner informed Simla of the existence of the Khudai Khidmatgars.[51] Yet, as witnessed by his glossing over of the situation in his communication with the Viceroy both during the viceregal tour of the province and after, Bolton was apparently loath to alert the Government of India to the severity of the situation.[52]

THE DAM BURSTS: THE BRITISH VERSION, APRIL 23rd 1930

By April 1930 the All-Indian Civil Disobedience movement was in full swing. On April 5th Gandhi reached the beach at Dandi and began the unlawful production of salt – the centerpiece of his second major challenge to British rule in the subcontinent. Having decided that supporting political reforms in the NWFP would help gain Muslim allies, Congress turned its eyes towards the Frontier. The Congress Working Committee decided to send a committee to enquire into the Frontier Crimes Regulation. Here Bolton drew the line. The administration announced the exclusion of the delegation from the NWFP and physically prevented the Congress committee from entering the province on April 22nd.[53] In retaliation, local nationalists announced that they would begin a picket of liquor stores the next morning, April 23rd.[54] When announcing this at a public meeting in Peshawar, one orator told the crowd to prepare for the "practical work" of challenging the Government on the morrow.[55]

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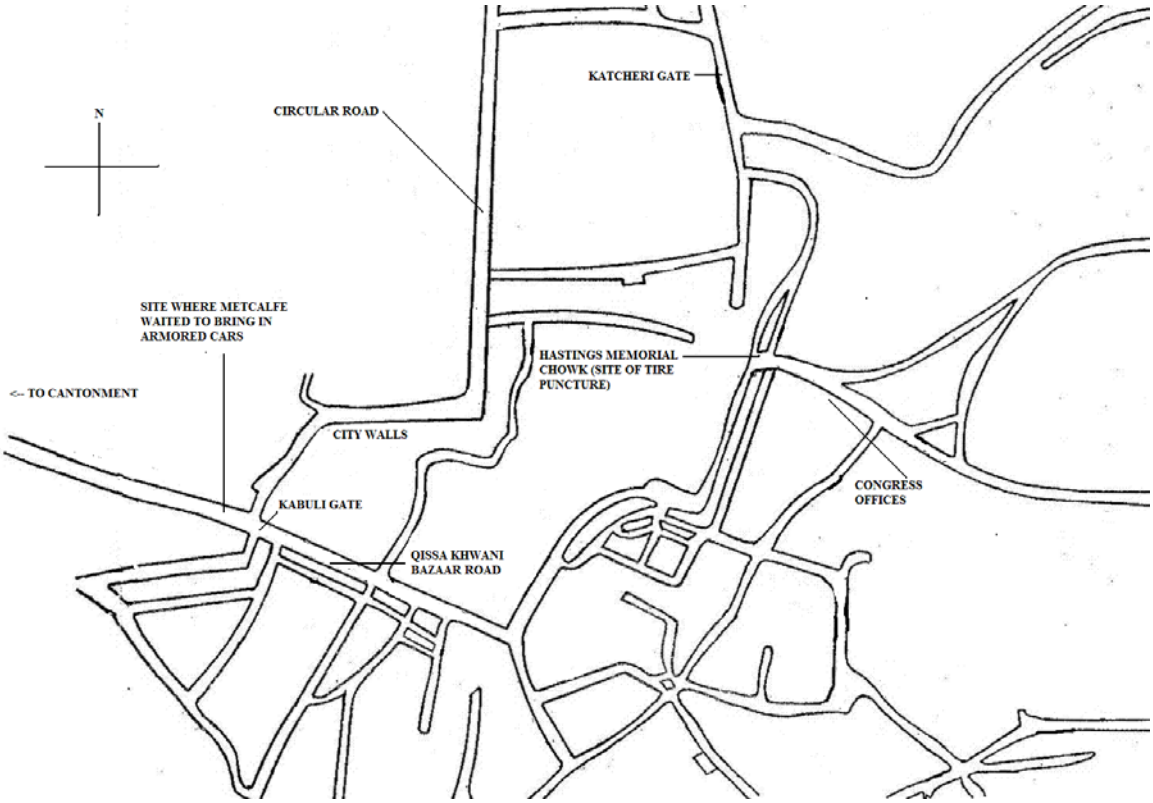
[51] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation for the First Half of April 1930. As usual, Bolton attached a silver lining to this development, writing that despite the "appearance" of the Khudai Khidmatgars in the Charsadda subdivision, Metcalfe's recent tour of this area was "well received."

[52] Bolton to Viceroy, 19 April 1930.

[53] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation for the Second Half of April 1930, L P&J 12/20. Uniquely, the Chief Commissioner was given the authority of exile and exclusion – and the ability to essentially seal off the NWFP – through the North-West Frontier Province Security Regulation, 1922. The British used this regulation extensively in this period and it became one of the primary nationalist grievances against the Government (see, for example, Maulana Allah Bukhsh Yusufi, *The Frontier Tragedy: An Account of the Inhuman Acts of Repression and Terrorism, Blockades, Loot, Incendiarism & Massacres – Through Which the People of the North-West Frontier Province Have Had to Go During the Present Disturbance* (Peshawar: All India Khilafat Committee, 1930), pp. 10-11).

[54] *Patel Report*, p. 5. At the beginning of April the local Congress committee decided to begin picketing liquor stores, a tactic used throughout India, but one with particular resonance in a 95% Muslim province.

[55] Report by F. Isemonger (Inspector General Police, NWFP) 2 May 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930.



Map 2: Peshawar City: Events on April 23rd, 1930

Viewing this as a direct challenge, the Frontier administration acted. On the night of the 22nd arrest warrants were issued for 12 nationalist organizers in Peshawar. The police raided the homes of these individuals between 2:30 and 3:00 the next morning.[56] Six men were arrested in their homes and three more rounded up over the course of the morning. Of the three remaining, one was in the Punjab.[57] But at 8:30 in the morning, the police learned that the other two, Ghulam Rabbani and Allah Bakhsh Bijili, were at the

[56] Report by R.H. Fooks (Senior Superintendent of Police, Peshawar), 24 April 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930.

[57] Report by F. Isemonger, 2 May 1930. This man, one Roshan Lal, was later arrested on his return from the Punjab on April 30th.

local Congress office. Accompanied by two lorries, a Sub-Inspector of Police, Allahuddin Shah, went to arrest them.[58]

Word of the impending arrests spread through the city and the police were confronted by a large crowd when he arrived at the Congress office shortly after 9:00.[59] Although Rabbani and Bijili were addressing the crowd from a balcony, they quickly wrapped up, telling the police that there was no need to come upstairs as they would willingly go with Shah to the Police *thana* or station.[60] The police set off with the prisoners accompanied by a large crowd. As the group travelled to the *thana* at Kabuli Gate the tires of the lorry holding Rabbani and Bijili were punctured by members of the swollen crowd and the convoy came to halt and the crowd surrounded the vehicle.[61]

While Shah waited for reinforcements, the two prisoners suggested that they make an appeal to try to calm the crowd and present themselves for arrest at the *thana*. Shah agreed and Rabbani and Bijili alighted from the lorry and, garlanded, led the crowd towards the Qissa Khwani Bazaar and the police station at Kabuli Gate. On arrival, Rabbani and Bijili found the gates to the *thana* barred from the inside. The police, seeing the size of the crowd, believed the station might be stormed.[62] After a half hour, the gates were finally opened and Rabbani and Bijili taken into custody. K.B. Saadullah Khan, a city magistrate who was inside the *thana*, then telephoned the Deputy Commissioner, Aubrey Metcalfe, and informed him that although some rocks had been thrown, the

[58] *Report of the Peshawar Disturbances Enquiry Committee*, 1930, Government of India, (TNA) WO 32/3526 (Hereafter "Sulaiman Report").

[59] The Congress' report on the events of the 23rd states that the crowd was in fact at the offices to cheer on the anti-liquor picketers. While some members of the crowd were probably there for that purpose it seems likely that the vast majority of the crowd was there as a result of the early morning raids (See *Patel Report*, p. 5).

[60] Sulaiman Report and *Patel Report*, p. 5.

[61] Report by R.H. Fooks, 24 April 1930.

[62] The Policemen were likely aware of the Chauri-Chaura incident in February 1922, when a crowd of peasants in the United Provinces attacked and burned a police station, killing the 23 policemen inside. Appalled at this violence, the incident convinced Gandhi to end the first non-cooperation movement. The best work on the subject is Shahid Amin's illuminating study of the incident and its place in Indian nationalist memory in *Event, Metaphor, Memory: Chauri Chaura, 1922-1992* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

crowd was essentially non-violent. He added that with the prisoners now in the station, the crowd was dispersing and there was no need for reinforcements.[63]

Although he received Saadullah Khan's phone call, Metcalfe discounted it, believing that his Indian subordinate was underestimating the violent nature of the crowd.[64] Moreover, the Senior Police Superintendent had contacted the local military units. They now waited for permission to move in. Expecting a conflict, Metcalfe had put the troops of the "City Disturbance Column" on alert the previous evening; he now called out the column and requested an armored car.[65] Wanting to "see what was happening," Metcalfe, Assistant Commissioner Evelyn Cobb, and the Police Superintendent set off in four armored cars – "Bray," "Bullicourt," "Bethune," and "Baupame" – towards Kabuli Gate.[66]

En route they encountered two other officers. The first was a local recruiting officer, Captain Hissamuddin, who confirmed Saadullah Khan's earlier reports that the crowd was breaking up. Several hundred yards later, however, Metcalfe encountered Mr. Selwyn, the Assistant Superintendent of Police, who had also recently come from the scene.[67] He shouted to Metcalfe that the he had "been pelted with stones, that the reserve police were unable to deal with the situation and that the crowd was entirely out of hand and very violent." This convinced Metcalfe that he was facing a certain riot. Again, Metcalfe put his trust in the report of a European subordinate rather than an Indian officer and ordered the armored car to proceed up to the Kabuli Gate at the western entrance to the old walled city.[68]

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[63] Sulaiman Report and *Patel Report*, pp. 5-6.

[64] Metcalfe, a product of Charterhouse and Christ Church, Oxford, had served as Sir John Maffey's assistant when Maffey was Private Secretary to Lord Chelmsford. He returned to Frontier service in 1917, but spent most of his time in the provincial secretariat rather than in district or tribal work. Caroe, who worked under Metcalfe when the latter was the Government of India's Foreign Secretary from 1933 to 1939, believed that Metcalfe remained "more at home as secretary than he was in the field" (Unpublished Caroe Memoir).

[65] Report by R.H. Fooks, 24 April 1930.

[66] Sulaiman Report. This last car was assumedly named after the village directly behind the British lines on the first day of the Battle of the Somme in July 1916.

[67] This much is corroborated in the Congress account of the events (*Patel Report*, p. 6).

[68] Sulaiman Report., p. 15.

The Government's later investigation made it clear that Selwyn had overreacted. A number of officials who had witnessed to the scene challenged the officer's claims that he had been stoned. This was further corroborated by a host of witnesses provided by the Congress and the Khilafat Committee.[69] The Government's report concluded:

> It must be remembered that Mr. Selwyn is a young and inexperienced officer. He felt himself confronted with an unexpected difficulty and his perplexity was probably apparent from his demeanour. Moreover, his horse was giving trouble. A senior officer would probably have handled the situation differently…[70]

Selwyn's "inexperience" was unfortunate. His exaggerated report to Metcalfe was a crucial link in the tragic chain of events that morning.

The arrival of the armored cars at the Kabuli Gate was pivotal. It is also where the Government and nationalist versions of events part company. Metcalfe told the Government's investigation, chaired by a Punjabi judge, Mr. Justice Sulaiman, that facing a crowd that still numbered between three and seven thousand, he weighed his options.[71] Although the crowd was mostly unarmed, a man wielding an axe caught Metcalfe's eye. This single "axe-wielder" apparently convinced the Deputy Commissioner that the situation was dire. Metcalfe said he believed he had three choices: ignore the crowd, shoot, or enter the city and reconnoiter the situation. He chose to enter. He failed, however, to communicate to the armored car commander, that he alone intended to carry out a reconnaissance in the lead car "Bray." The armored car commander prepared to escort as if it were a military action. Metcalfe went ahead in "Bray," followed by the other three vehicles.[72]

Both the Congress and the Government agreed that once the armored cars entered the city chaos let loose. Every British witness, as well as a number of Indians, claimed that the crowd immediately began throwing bricks and stones at the cars, prompting them to close up. With limited visibility, the vehicles accelerated, and the British admitted to running over six Peshawaris and a Private Bryant, a despatch rider who had entered the

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[69] *Patel Report*, p. 5, and Yusufi, *The Frontier Tragedy*, p. 25.
[70] Sulaiman Report, p. 15.
[71] This number is supported in the Congress report.
[72] Sulaiman Report, pp. 15-16.

city on his motorcycle.[73] Still in the lead car, Metcalfe drove east up the Qissa Khwani Bazaar road before turning around and returning to the *thana* at Kabuli Gate. One armored car, "Bullicourt" was able to follow Metcalfe to the steps of the station but the other two cars were stuck in the midst of the crowd.[74]

Metcalfe and his assistant, Cobb, claimed that when the second armored car, "Bullicourt," pulled up at the *thana*, it was immediately set upon by the crowd. Lieutenant Synge, the commander of the armored car, alighted with his pistol drawn. He was then attacked by a member of the crowd who sought to wrest the weapon from his hands. Several officers, including Metcalfe and Cobb, went to his assistance. In the course of the struggle, Synge accidently discharged his pistol, hitting an Indian police inspector in the hand. According the British account, the sound of the shot enraged the crowd further. Metcalfe, who was on the *thana's* steps, was hit in the face by a flying brick. Knocked unconscious, he was dragged inside. The other officers also moved inside, barring the gate behind them.[75]

According to the evidence submitted to the Sulaiman Committee, Cobb then went up to the roof, where he saw "Bethune," its crew still within, and the body of the dead despatch rider, Private Bryant, being lit ablaze by the crowd.[76] All British witnesses, including the correspondent for Lahore's *Civil and Military Gazette*, claimed that the crowd, attempting to collect the bodies of the men run over by "Bethune," attacked the vehicle, and, finding a drum of kerosene, lit both the armored car and Bryant's corpse. [77] Cobb testified that upon seeing "Bethune" on fire – its crew firing their pistols as they sought to escape – he went downstairs and asked a dazed Metcalfe for permission to open fire. Metcalfe quickly agreed and issued the order. Cobb and Synge ran to the roof,

[73] Report by R.H. Fooks, 24 April 1930 and Sulaiman Report, p. 18.
[74] Sulaiman Report, p. 18.
[75] Sulaiman Report, p. 21. According to Metcalfe, the crowd was pilfering bricks from a nearby culvert construction site on Mochipura Lane.
[76] Sulaiman Report, p. 21.
[77] The *Civil and Military Gazette's* reporter painted the scene in particularly lurid colors, charging that the Private was "struck down with a shovel and, while lying unconscious, was stoned to death by frenzied rioters…they then poured kerosene oil over his body and saturated the leading car with petrol…a match was then applied to the unfortunate victim and the flames from the body ignited the car, which was practically burned out" ("Stoned to Death" in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, 26 April 1930, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML)).

shouting "Fire! Fire!" to the commander of "Bray." Believing that the crew could not hear them, Synge ran out of the *thana*, firing his pistol as he made for "Bray." Once Synge reached the armored car, the crew immediately opened fire with the vehicle's mounted machine gun. This was at 10:45 in the morning.[78] Without noting the number of casualties from this first firing, the Government's report stated that "the effect of the firing was to clear the street immediately."[79]

Cobb reported that the crowd soon regrouped, and he requested that more troops be brought to Kabuli Gate. At this point, the Inspector General of Police, F.C. Isemonger, arrived on the scene and took command from Cobb. Isemonger immediately placed a cordon of policemen and Frontier Constabulary around the flaming "Bethune" while the municipal fire engine was brought in to put out the fire. Isemonger claimed that the crowd surged forward and stood on the hose, rendering the engine ineffective.[80] Meanwhile, a detachment of King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (KOYLI) arrived at the scene and Isemonger put them into cordon duty. Shortly thereafter a Squadron of Indian cavalry arrived along with two platoons of the 2nd Battalion, 18th Royal Garhwal Rifles regiment. The British claimed that the crowd now numbered between 1,000 and 2,000 and was growing. Isemonger replaced the KOYLI with the Garhwalis, believing that a piquet made up of the Indian Garhwalis would be "less provocative" to the crowd than British troops.[81]

Isemonger claimed that he was concerned that the swelling crowd, shouting, as he put it, "the usual Congress clap trap," would try to set fire to the other armored cars that still occupied the Qissa Khwani road.[82] So he ordered "Bray" forward to knock down the barricades that the crowd had recently constructed out of packing cases and a few bullock

[78] The British version of events becomes somewhat confused over the chronology of this first firing. In particular, the Sulaiman Report presents one chronology while the initial report made on April 24th by the Senior Superintendent of Police, R.H. Fooks, presents another. Fooks, who was in the *thana*, reported that the incident in which a Peshawari attempted to wrest Lieutenant Synge's gun away from him happened not while he was initially going into the *thana*, but later, when he ran into the crowd to instruct the crew of "Bray" to open fire on the crowd (Report by R.H. Fooks, 24 April 1930).

[79] Sulaiman Report, p. 21.

[80] Report by F. Isemonger, 2 May 1930.

[81] Sulaiman Report, p. 23.

[82] Report by F. Isemonger, 24 April1930, HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930.

carts. Isemonger claimed that as the armored car advanced he saw several men approaching with straw and kerosene.[83] At this, he ordered the Garhwalis to advance. The Indian troops were apparently hesitant to do this and their British commanding officer had to shout twice at one of the platoons to form up and move forward. They moved forward but kept their rifles at their right side. Their commander, Captain Ricketts, seized the barrel of one of the rifles to place it down, facing the crowd, in the manner he wished his troops to advance. The Garhwalis marched into the crowd so that they were "breast to breast" with them.[84]

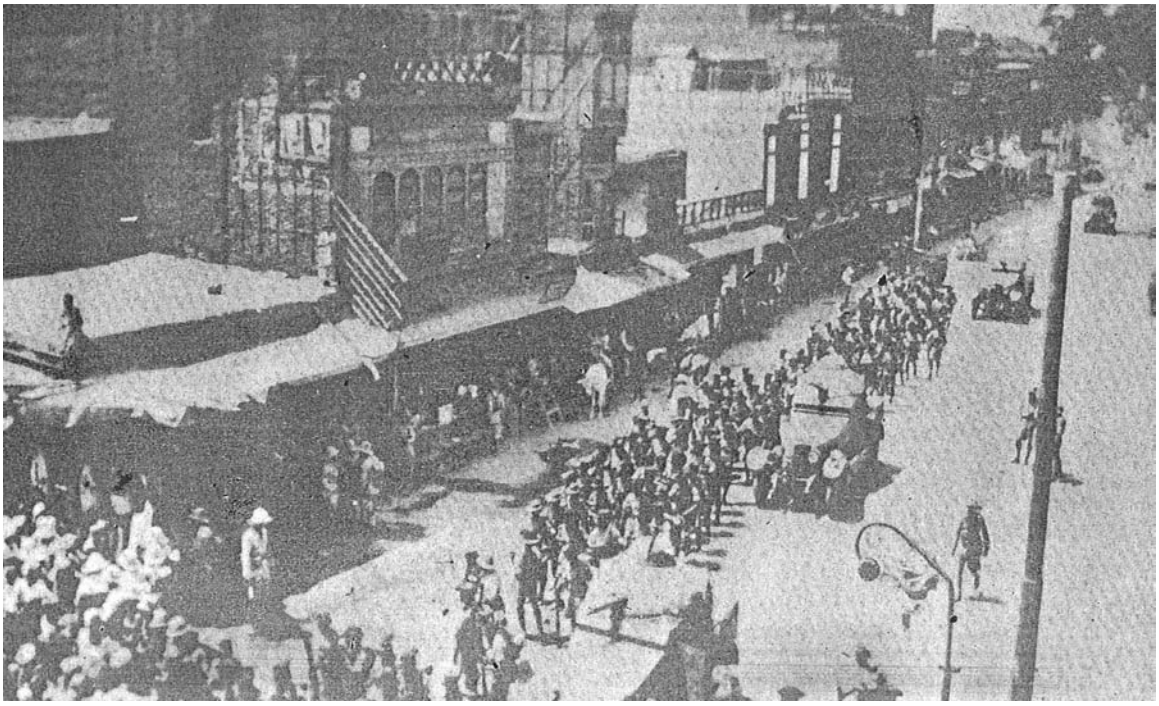

Illustration 4: Armored Cars in the Qissa Khwani Bazaar[85]

[83] Sulaiman Report, p. 23. Isemonger was also apparently concerned about a member of the crowd wielding an axe.

[84] Proceedings of a Court of Inquiry into the Mutiny of the 2nd Btn. 18th Royal Garhwal Rifles at Peshawar, 23-24 April 1930, held at Abbottabad and Peshawar, 28 April -7 May 1930, (IOR) L MIL 5/861.

[85] Reproduced from the *Patel Report*.

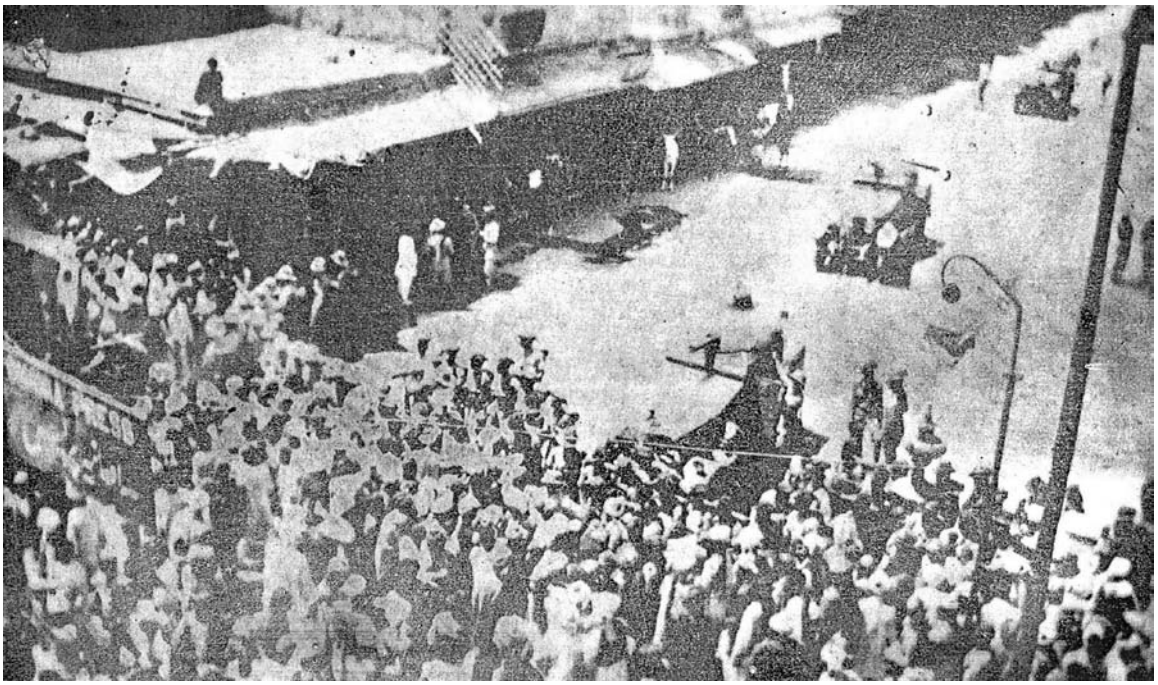

Illustration 5: Crowd gathering around "Bray" prior to the second round of shootings in the Qissa Khwani Bazaar.[86]

The British account states that for the next hour (between 12:30 and 1:30 pm) the crowd continued to move forward, pressing against the riflemen and hurling bricks at them. The Garhwali commander, Captain Ricketts, was hit twice in the head, rendering him bloodied and unconscious. Ten of the 25 riflemen in this forward platoon were also injured and subsequently sent to the hospital. The Garhwalis were packed so tight with the crowd – a decision the Sulaiman Committee later judged "imprudent" – that they could neither raise their rifles nor fix bayonets. Finally, the crowd began snatching at the Garhwalis' rifles and Jemandar Luthi Singh fired three rounds while a member of the crowd held the barrel of his rifle.[87] At this point Isemonger appears to have been convinced that he was dealing with a "revolutionary" situation on par with the Punjab

[86] Reproduced from *Patel Report*.

[87] Jemander was a "Viceroy's Commission" (i.e. Indian officer without a full "King's Commission") rank roughly analogous to a lieutenant in the British Army.

disturbances in 1919.[88] He withdrew the Garhwalis and ordered the KOYLI to advance and fire at the crowd. He simultaneously ordered the three armored cars to open up on the crowd with their machine guns.[89]

The crowd broke and ran. At the same time (around 2 pm) the Chief Secretary of NWFP, Olaf Caroe, who had been in the Cantonment to the west of the walled city, arrived and agreed that the demonstrators should be pursued by the British troops. Demonstrations had now spread throughout the city and the British troops advanced down the lanes and streets to the east of Kabuli Gate and north towards the Katcheri Gate. The British claimed that the troops were bombarded with bricks and stones by people on the rooftops and balconies and they replied with gunfire. The firing continued until four or five in the afternoon, when the city was, for the moment, "pacified." By day's end the Government's official estimate tallied 30 civilians killed and 39 wounded, though they admitted that there were likely more casualties.[90]

THE DAM BURSTS: THE CONGRESS VERSION, APRIL 23rd 1930

The nationalist account of these events shared the same essential outline and chronology, but the Congress Report, authored by the nationalist leader Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, parted company with the British version on a number of key points. The Congress account agreed with the Government that the situation began to get out of hand when the four armored cars entered the city through Kabuli Gate. Metcalfe himself admitted that it could have been "better handled."[91] The nationalists asserted, however, that *at no point* did the crowd resort to throwing rocks or bricks at the armored cars, police, or British officials. Instead, the cars came into the city at great speed, immediately running over between 12 and 14 Peshawaris. Unlike the British account – which placed the casualties at five or six – Congress's witnesses claimed that no projectiles had been aimed at the cars and so they never closed up. The Peshawaris and Private Bryant died

[88] Report by F. Isemonger, 24 April 1930.
[89] Sulaiman Report, p. 25.
[90] Sulaiman Report, p. 27.
[91] Sulaiman Report, p. 16.

because the cars were travelling at a reckless speed. Patel's report was especially keen on discounting the charge that Bryant had been knocked off his motorcycle by the crowd, a charge with which the European community in Northwest India was making considerable hay.[92] Bryant, the witnesses said, had been knocked off his motorcycle after colliding with one of the armored cars and was then fatally run over by the same vehicle.[93]

Next, Patel's committee found that the fire in "Bethune" was caused not by the crowd as they sought to collect the bodies of the dead and injured, but when "fire was opened by someone from the car" causing "Bethune" to catch fire from the inside. The report reasoned that "it was very difficult to believe that any unarmed men could deliberately go so near an armoured car and also set fire to it knowing full well that other armoured cars which were there would immediately kill them on the spot."[94] The Congress noted that the Government's original communiqués failed to mention the supposed arson.[95]

Although the Patel Report argued that the crowd was in no way violent, it did admit that the crowd *may* have begun throwing pebbles at the armored cars and British officers after the cars ran over members of the crowd. It remained purposefully vague on what had happened to Metcalfe on the *thana* steps, suggesting that the Deputy Commissioner was hit by a pebble and thereafter "fell down unconscious" on the steps.[96] Regarding the first firing, which all parties agreed Metcalfe ordered after regaining consciousness, the Congress charged that the Deputy Commissioner ordered it not in order to protect the crew of "Bethune" as Cobb testified, but as retribution for being hit with a stone. The report stated "it seems to us clear that the Deputy Commissioner had

[92] "Stoned to Death" in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, 26 April 1930.
[93] *Patel Report*, pp. 14-15.
[94] *Patel Report*, p. 16.
[95] Communiqué by Herbert Emerson, 5 May 1930. This was true, yet the Senior Police Superintendent's initial report from the 24th stated that the fire was started by members of the crowd. It is unclear why this was omitted from the Government's subsequent press reports (Report by R.H. Fooks, 24 April 1930).
[96] *Patel Report*, p. 17. It should be noted that Metcalfe took a six month medical leave immediately following this incident. Caroe and Francis Wylie replaced Metcalfe as temporary dual Deputy Commissioners (Unpublished Caroe Memoirs).

used this little incident of an injury to him as an occasion for ordering the armoured car to open fire."[97]

The second firing, ordered by Isemonger, was, Congress claimed, based on even flimsier reasoning than the first.[98] As the crowd grew between 11 in the morning and 1:30 in the afternoon, both the British and Congress agreed that a local nationalist, Hakim Abdul Jalil Khan, attempted to diffuse the situation. Hakim, whom Isemonger admittedly did not trust, testified to Patel's committee that he told the Inspector General that crowd control could be carried out with the use of the fire engine's hose.[99] Isemonger, according to Hakim, replied, "we have decided upon our arrangements, and we must proceed with them." Meanwhile the crowd moved forward, attempting to collect the bodies of the dead. Congress claimed that the Garhwalis refused to fire on the crowd and thereafter Isemonger ordered the British troops to open fire on the crowd, killing old men, women and children indiscriminately.[100]

In this vein, the initial Congress reports on the violence in the Qissa Khwani Bazaar emphasized the brutality of the shootings and personal bravery of the victims. The Congress Bulletin for the week, published by Patel, claimed:

> When those in the front fell down wounded by the shots those behind came forward with their breast bare, and exposed themselves to the fire so much so that some people got as many as twenty six bullet wounds in their body and all the people stood their ground without getting into a panic. A young Sikh boy came and stood in front of a soldier and asked him to fire at him which the soldier unhesitantly did, killing him.[101]

Patel's later report, based on the testimony of 70 witnesses, paints a less heroic picture, emphasizing instead the panic that overcame the crowd as they fled into the alleys and lanes leading from the Qissa Khwani Bazaar.

Patel's report included photographs [**see illustrations 4 and 5**] taken at various stages during the morning and early afternoon. Congress maintained that Isemonger's decision to fire that afternoon and his subsequent decision, along with Caroe, to pursue

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[97] *Patel Report*, p. 19.

[98] The leader of the local Khilafat Committee believed Isemonger to be "a personal enemy of each and every Indian" (Yusufi, p. 27).

[99] Sulaiman Report, p. 22.

[100] *Patel Report*, p. 21.

[101] The Bombay Congress Bulletin: Peshawar Supplement, 24 April-3 May 1930, HOME (POL.) F 255/5/1930.

the demonstrators, was not based on any actual threat, and that the crowd carried neither, *lathis* nor crowbars, as the Inspector General attested. The photographs seem to support this view, though there is no telling when, in the course of events, they were taken.[102]Although the Congress suggested that perhaps two to three hundred persons were gunned down that day, their investigation officially placed the death toll at 125 – almost 100 more than the British.[103]

Neither the witnesses for the British investigation nor the Congress investigation produced fully coherent narratives of the day's events. Both versions of the demonstration and subsequent shootings exhibit conjecture and disagreements among those that were there. Moreover, both reports were essentially political documents. The British report was charged with showing that the "mob" that confronted Metcalfe on that Wednesday morning was dangerous and on the verge of real violence. The Congress, on the other hand, needed to show that the nationalist movement on the Frontier was non-violent in character – especially when compared to the heavy hand of British rule in the Province. The fact that the nationalists in question were Pathans, whom both the British and many politically minded Indians believed to be born with a gun at their side, made it especially important that Patel and his committee paint a picture of peaceful non-violence.

Despite the strong elements of whitewashing by both parties, a few things stand out. On the British side, Mr. Justice Sulaiman's report makes it clear that Aubrey Metcalfe's actions that morning greatly exacerbated the situation. His decision to believe his European subordinates over the Indian ones was the first problem. Secondly, his decision to send in the armored cars, when he himself only saw one man with an axe, was disastrous.[104] It appears that Metcalfe and the British overreacted – with dire consequences. The Congress version of events presented the demonstrators as blameless, yet the British claim that the crowd was throwing bricks and stones at Metcalfe, the armored cars, and the soldiers and police – which the Congress vehemently denied –

[102] *Patel Report*, Exhibits "T" and "U".
[103] *Patel Report*, p. 28.
[104] Sulaiman Report, p. 16.

appears to have been true. A number of British personnel went to the hospital that day with terrible wounds from getting hit by bricks and stones. Some were out of commission for months.[105]

Finally, there is the discrepancy as to the number of civilian fatalities sustained on April 23rd. The Sulaiman Report put the number of civilian dead at 30, although it admitted there were no doubt more of which the Government was unaware.[106] The Congress placed the number at 125 and drew up a detailed list of the deceased.[107] Attaining the actual number would be impossible, yet one thing is clear: the British responded with an unwarranted degree of violence when confronting the crowd in the Qissa Khwani Bazaar. In April and May of 1930 local administrations throughout India were beset by large-scale nationalist demonstrations. On several occasions troops were called out and shootings occurred, but nowhere was there close to the number of "official" dead as in Peshawar. Nor were machine guns used.[108] Regardless of which numbers are believed, the Government's or Patel's, the number of civilian dead at Peshawar is exceeded in the twentieth century Raj only by General Dyer's Jallianwallah Bagh massacre at Amritsar in 1919.[109]

THE "LOSS" OF PESHAWAR

As more troops entered Peshawar on the evening of the 23rd, the city fell quiet.[110] The next morning the local Congress office reopened, and a general strike was declared

[105] See Proceedings of a Court of Inquiry into the Mutiny of the 2nd Btn. 18th Royal Garhwal Rifles at Peshawar, 23-24 April 1930, held at Abbottabad and Peshawar, 28 April -7 May 1930, Unpublished Caroe Memoirs, and "Mob Violence in Peshawar" in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, 26 April 1930.

[106] Sulaiman Report, p. 27

[107] *Patel Report*, pp. 240-243.

[108] On May 8th, for instance, a demonstration in Delhi was met with gunfire, killing, according to the official count, six and injuring 70 ("Calcutta and Delhi Riot Details" in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, 9 May 1930).

[109] The Government estimated that 379 men, women, and children died in the Amritsar shootings. See Chapter Three, Alfred Draper, *Amritsar: The Massacre that Ended the Raj* (London: Cassell, 1981), and Nigel Collett, *The Butcher of Amritsar: General Reginald Dyer* (London: Hambledon , 2005).

[110] Despatch by H.E. Field Marshal Sir William Birdwood, Commander-in-Chief in India, on the Disturbances on the North West Frontier of India from 23rd April to 12th September, 1930, 14 November 1930, WO 32/3526.

throughout the city with only a few tea shops staying open.[111] Troops remained in the city and, by all accounts, the atmosphere remained tense. Violence threatened to break out at several times. The correspondent for the *Civil and Military Gazette* reported that a mob shouting "*Inqilab Zindabad*" (Long Live Revolution) had tried to pull him out of his rickshaw, but the arrival of British troops convinced the crowd to move along.[112]

More ominously, two platoons of the 2nd Battalion of the 18th Royal Garhwali Rifles – the same troops that had faced the crowd in the Qissa Khwani Bazaar the day before – refused to move back into the city when so ordered that afternoon. This was mutiny. Led by two non-commissioned officers, Havildars Chandar Singh and Naraia Singh, the soldiers refused to embuss for the city and demanded that every man in the two platoons be discharged from the service within the next 24 hours.[113] When pressed by their Indian officers, the troops threatened to kill them and said to one, with a clear reference to the mutiny of the Bengal Army in 1857, "Blow me away from the guns, I will not move." Shortly thereafter several British regimental officers arrived on the scene and, although the soldiers continued to insist that they receive immediate discharge from the service, they were easily disarmed and confined to their barracks.[114]

The Garhwal mutiny plunged the Frontier administration into a panic. Already shaken by the shootings on the 23rd, Bolton telegraphed the Viceroy with the news of the mutiny. He greatly exaggerated the extent of the soldiers' intransigence, informing Irwin that the two platoons refused to obey orders because "they would not fire on their own people."[115] Alarmed, Irwin telegraphed Wedgwood Benn, the new Labour Secretary of State for India. The Indian army was a cornerstone of British rule and the possibility that Indian troops would not "fire on their own people" jeopardized the entire Raj. Irwin wrote:

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[111] Report by F. Isemonger, 2 May 1930.

[112] "More Troops in Peshawar" in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, 27 April 1930.

[113] A Havildar was the equivalent of a sergeant in the British Army.

[114] Proceedings of a Court of Inquiry into the Mutiny of the 2nd Btn. 18th Royal Garhwal Rifles at Peshawar, 23-24 April 1930, held at Abbottabad and Peshawar, 28 April -7 May 1930.

[115] NWFP to Viceroy, 26 April 1930, (IOR) L PO 4/18A.

> [The] Garwhal [sic] incident has set me thinking of possibilities that might arise should the situation seriously deteriorate and should other Indian battalions prove unreliable. In such event we should have to ask for substantial reinforcements of British troops.[116]

Benn consulted with the military staff in the India Office and informed Irwin that British reinforcements would be ready for India at the "word go," adding that he hated contemplating such measures. Yet, "being a good pacifist…I believe in striving to be efficient if force has to be applied."[117]

Ultimately, no British reinforcements were needed. The Garhwal mutiny proved to be an isolated event.[118] The initial great fear – that the refusal to obey orders was prompted by sympathies for the nationalist movement – was put to rest in the course of an Army investigation in early May. Blame, the court believed, lay at the feet of the treatment the two platoons underwent in Peshawar on the 23rd. With fresh memories of the previous day, they did not want to go back to city because of the "degrading and demoralizing treatment" they received at "the hands of a savage mob." The previous day had been something "no soldier wearing the King's uniform should be asked to stand." The court claimed that despondent and without the leadership of their British commander, who was in hospital, the Garhwalis, who were "blindly obedient to orders," unwisely followed the incitements of the two Havildars, Singh and Singh. Although these two non-commissioned officers had clearly conspired against the Crown, the court concluded with relief that rather than having links to the nationalist movement, they were simply two "malcontents." Convinced that the mutiny had no direct connection with nationalism, the court adjourned, convicting the soldiers to various terms of imprisonment.[119]

On the night of April 24th, however, the Frontier administration still believed that the Garhwal Mutiny was hand in glove with the nationalist "agitators." Moreover, the rural areas of Peshawar District were also in upheaval, and Bolton, the Chief

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[116] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 26 April 1930, L PO/4/18A. News of the mutiny alarmed provincial administrations throughout India. For example see Sir Stanley Jackson (Governor of Bengal) to Irwin, 28 April 1930, Halifax Papers C152/24.

[117] Benn to Irwin, 1 May 1930, L PO 4/18A.

[118] Irwin to Benn, 1 May 1930, Halifax Papers C152/6.

[119] Proceedings of a Court of Inquiry into the Mutiny of the 2nd Btn. 18th Royal Garhwal Rifles at Peshawar, 23-24 April 1930, held at Abbottabad and Peshawar, 28 April -7 May 1930.

Commissioner, called an impromptu meeting of his officers and local worthies. The deputation of city fathers persuaded Bolton – who was beginning to show signs of cracking – that unrest would only dissipate if he withdrew all troops from the city.[120] Stunningly, he quickly agreed, and troops began to leave the walled city at 10:30 in the evening. Writing in retirement, Olaf Caroe recalled:

> I shall never forget my feeling of dismay and despair on hearing of Bolton's action in deciding to withdraw from the City; it seemed to me that the whole border would probably go up in smoke, and I wondered how many of us would be left. And what of the rest of India, with a Frontier in flames; what of the Afghans; and even the Russians beyond? [121]

Within hours this vacuum in authority was filled by nationalist organizers. Police barricaded themselves in their *thanas* and the Congress and its allies took over the day to day operation of the city.[122]

When Bolton realized that he has lost control of the city, this 25-year veteran of the Frontier suffered a mental breakdown. Unable to sleep, Bolton wrote increasingly panicked messages to Simla. Officials within the Government of India itself were appalled by Bolton's decision to "give up" Peshawar to the nationalists. With only sketchy information, the Home Secretary, Herbert Emerson, realized that Bolton's description of the situation "would seem to indicate that the authority of government has been or is being replaced by that of Congress." This abdication was "highly disturbing."[123] At this point, the Viceroy, who was now receiving telegrams from Bolton stating that the province should immediately receive full reforms, decided that the Chief Commissioner was "losing his grip" and sent Evelyn Howell to Peshawar.[124]

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[120] Unpublished Caroe Memoirs.

[121] Unpublished Caroe Memoirs.

[122] Report by F. Isemonger, 2 May 1930 and "An Appreciation of the Situation" by F.C. Isemonger, 26 April 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930.

[123] Telegram from Home Dept. to NWFP, 29 April 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930.

[124] Irwin to Benn, 1 May 1930. The new Minister to Kabul, Sir Richard Maconachie, was also in Peshawar at the time, waiting to travel up the Khyber and resume the British Legation in Afghanistan, empty since the 1929 evacuation. Irwin's decision to send Howell, was also influenced by Maconachie's concerns over Bolton's mental state, which he telegraphed to the Viceroy.

A long-time Frontier officer and former Resident in Waziristan, Howell was a scholar-administrator with of proven record of grace under pressure.[125] In an emergency, the Foreign Secretary was the man for the job. Interrupting work on his monograph on Waziristan's Mahsuds, *Mizh*, Howell left Simla on the evening of April 28th and flew to Peshawar, arriving there at noon the next day.[126] He was met at the aerodrome by several officials and Bolton's wife, Edith. Lady Bolton took Howell aside, telling him:

> If I felt that…Bill [Bolton] was still the right man in the right place I'd say 'keep him here', even though I knew that he would be killed. But he's not. His grip has gone completely. He has lost all balance and control…For three nights neither he nor I slept at all.[127]

Following this introduction to the situation, Howell motored to Government House in Peshawar Cantonment and interviewed Bolton himself. Howell was taken aback by the stacks of files, arranged with "no method of finality." Officials in Government House told the Foreign Secretary that Bolton was taking whatever opinion the last person he spoke to espoused and so Howell effectively took over the administration.[128]

Congress had now controlled Peshawar for five days and Howell attempted to rally both the administration and Bolton. He called for the civil surgeon to attend to the Chief Commissioner and played a game of tennis with the Boltons, hoping it would help them sleep. By the end of the evening the situation within Government House seemed to be under control and Howell believed that Bolton could stay on for another few weeks in order to see the crisis through and train his successor, Steuart Pears. Any thoughts of Bolton marching away "with drums beating and colours flying," however, were dashed at 5:30 the next morning, when Lady Bolton burst into Howell's bedroom, telling him that "It's all up, Bill is off his head…He keeps hearing the sound of firing and the shrieks of women and children!" Howell found Bolton twisted up in his bed, but eventually

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[125] See for instance, Howell's account of his stealthy midnight disarmament of a murderous Mahsud militia as Political Agent, South Waziristan, in 1907, in E.B. Howell, *Mizh: A Monograph of Government's Relations with the Mahsud Tribe* (Simla: Government of India Press, 1931).

[126] Howell to J.C. Walton (Foreign and Political Secretary to the India Office), 28 May 1930, Walton Papers (IOR), D545/6.

[127] Howell to George Cunningham (Private Secretary to the Viceroy), 30 April 1930, Halifax Papers C152/6.

[128] Howell to Cunningham, 30 April 1930.

convinced him that the firing he heard was imaginary.[129] It was time for Bolton to leave. Within an hour he and Lady Bolton were en route to Rawalpindi, where they joined the Bombay Mail.[130] A week later they were on the liner Viceroy of India, bound for England.[131] The British press in India, which in order to stem any panic about the situation in the NWFP had refrained from reporting the full extent of Congress' control of Peshawar or the Garhwal Mutiny, followed suit with Bolton's departure. Although rumors swirled that among other things, Bolton had been murdered, his exit was only reported a week later after Peshawar had been retaken.[132]

As Congress's Civil Disobedience movement swept India in the spring of 1930, there are few parallels to Bolton's disintegration. Although he was undoubtedly a tired man to begin with, having served as Chief Commissioner for seven years, this alone does not explain his breakdown.[133] Confused by the situation and feeling "betrayed" by "his people," he simply fell apart.[134]

CONCLUSION

Indian and British regiments retook Peshawar on the morning of May 4th, 1930.[135] Any rejoicing, however, was overshadowed by the fact that the preceding two weeks had witnessed a near total breakdown of the British administration on the Frontier. Moreover, the administration's difficulties vis-à-vis Frontier nationalism had just begun. Over the next two years the nationalists and the British would be locked in a small scale war

[129] Howell to Cunningham, 30 April 1930.

[130] George Cunningham to his Sister, 10 May 1930, Cunningham Papers (IOR) D670/39.

[131] "Sir N. Bolton" in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, 4 May 1930.

[132] The *Civil and Military Gazette* added that "a touch of romance has been added to the story by the announcement of the engagement" of Bolton's daughter Iris, who had been in Simla, to "Mr. Best, Deputy Commissioner of Kohat ("India Loses a Great Administrator", in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, 5 May 1930).

[133] Bolton's tenure was to end in the fall of 1930, when he would be replaced by Steuart Pears, then Resident at the princely state of Mysore (Irwin to Bolton, 27 March 1930, Halifax Papers C152/24).

[134] Three weeks before the "Peshawar Disturbances" Bolton learned that his tenure on the Frontier would end in the fall. He wrote Irwin: "I have lived the best years of my life in this Province and my life's work, such as it is, has been done here, and I have sincere friendship with many of the people" (Bolton to Irwin, 3 April 1930, Halifax Papers C152/24).

[135] See Chapter Five.

throughout the Frontier, a conflict exacerbated by the introduction of the tribes into the fray in summer 1930. As of early May, however, the abiding question was how did this breakdown – starting with Metcalfe's flawed decision to send the armored cars into Peshawar and ending with Bolton's mental collapse – come to pass?

Howell's verdict, which emphasized the local administration's "supineness" in the face of growing nationalist sentiment, offers the basic answer.[136] But the problem went far deeper than that. The administration's "wishful thinking" about the situation between 1928 and April 1930 lay in its ideological commitment to what many officers believed to be the "true nature" of the Frontier Province and its Pathan inhabitants.[137] Some Frontier officers, such as C.E. Bruce and Olaf Caroe, recognized the genuine threat posed to the British administration by nationalism and the discontent that underwrote it, but most, like Bolton and Metcalfe, chose to believe that the oratory of men like Abdul Ghaffar Khan fell on deaf ears; they believed the villagers and even the urban population remained impervious to what was simply "agitation."[138] These officials believed that they, rather than the nationalist leadership, understood the common man and his concerns. Some political activity on the Frontier, such as the Marxist *Anjuman-i-Naujawanan-i-Sarhad*, was watched closely, and even feared. But this was the exception that proved the rule. To the administration, this organization, though minuscule, represented the *external* Marxist threat posed by Soviet Russia and perhaps even Afghanistan. The NWFP government reasoned that since the Pathan, by character and geography, was somehow inoculated to political events taking place "down-country" in India, external threats remained the real problem.

This state of mind contributed to the actual breakdown in British authority in Peshawar city between April 23rd and May 4th. Most importantly, the administration's previously blinkered approach to politics in the province meant that few had any understanding of what it was they were dealing with. Having misunderstood the deep well of economic and social discontent in the settled districts, the administration had no

[136] Note by E.B. Howell, 24 May 1930.
[137] See Chapter Three.
[138] Summary of the Views Expressed to the Joint Conference by the Hon. Sir H. N. Bolton, KCIE, CSI, ICS, Chief Commissioner, NWFP, 20 November 1928, Simon Papers F77/47.

idea that the arrest of the 12 nationalist organizers would trigger large demonstrations. Official ignorance of nationalism in Peshawar district meant that there was little understanding of the movement's non-violent principles. Although these were not as pure as the Congress report indicated, they were real enough and it is unlikely that the crowd that accompanied the two Congress organizers to the *thana* on April 23rd was inclined towards violence. But Metcalfe, ignorant of this, and assuming that he was dealing with an angry and therefore violent "mob" – despite the evidence to the contrary – sent in armored cars, which provided the catalyst for a tragic chain of events.

The events of April 23rd represent a watershed in the history of the Frontier. Prior to that fateful day, the Frontier administration and the Government of India assumed that the region remained outside "political" India. The Frontier was a dangerous region full of threats, yet these had always been external – the trans-border tribes, the Afghans, or the Russians. From this point on the greatest threat to British rule in the NWFP came from within. In the coming months the administration, civil and military, in Delhi and Peshawar, would begin to take the measure of what it was they faced. Slowly, they began to understand that the decade long program of sealing the Frontier off from the rest of the subcontinent had collapsed.

CHAPTER FOUR:
"THESE INFERNAL KHUDAI KHIDMATGARAN": DEFINING AND REPRESSING FRONTIER NATIONALISM, 1930-1932

In the spring of 1930, after years of ignoring the growing nationalist movement in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), the local British administration was suddenly confronted with a full-scale rebellion throughout the province. Beginning with a nationalist demonstration and subsequent shooting of Indian civilians by British troops in Peshawar on April 23rd, unrest quickly spread throughout the province.[1] Within days the British had evacuated Peshawar city and much of the NWFP was essentially beyond their control. At the beginning of June the British position was further weakened by an onslaught of tribal *lashkars* who descended upon the Vale of Peshawar to fight the Government's forces.[2] Taken by surprise, the British, both in Peshawar and in Delhi, struggled to understand the nature of this opposition and how to beat what was now a major challenge to their rule on the Frontier and in India as a whole.[3]

This chapter examines the expansion of the North-West Frontier revolt from May 1930 to the fall of 1931, and the British administration's attempt both to define and control the unrest in this period. It argues that although the nationalist uprising on the Frontier coincided with the Gandhi's All-Indian Civil Disobedience movement of 1930-33, the British administration, which still viewed the trans-Indus territories as separate in culture and mentality from the rest of India, was loath to admit that the local nationalist movement was directly related to the All-Indian struggle. While officials acknowledged that Abdul Ghaffar Khan's nationalist supporters – "these infernal Khudai Khidmatgaran," as the India Foreign Secretary, Evelyn Howell, called them, or, more commonly, the "Red Shirts" – were associated with Congress, they refused to believe that

[1] See Chapter Three.

[2] " War Parties"

[3] See Viceroy (Lord Irwin) to Secretary of State for India (W. Wedgwood Benn), 14 May 1930, Halifax Papers, India Office Records (IOR), C152/6.

they had the same aims as national movement.[4] British administrators and officers insisted that the Pathan had no desire for home rule or Indian independence. Rather, they believed that the Red Shirts were either a front for Bolshevism or the product of "wicked rumours" about supposed threats to Islam on the Frontier. They therefore saw the problem as either externally motivated or the product of the Pathan's "deep seated religious fanaticism."

Second, this chapter explores the British administration's range of responses once they finally concluded that they were dealing with an actual nationalist movement allied with the wider All-Indian Congress party. Despite this realization, many within the administration believed that that they must deal with the nationalist movement on the Frontier in a manner different from that used in the rest of the subcontinent, and pursued a violent riposte to the Red Shirt movement. This policy was motivated by the continuing belief that "the Pathan" was violent by nature and would only understand "a firm hand," and that the region was religiously, geographically, and culturally distinct from "the plains."

PESHAWAR AND THE SPREADING REVOLT

Following the British withdrawal from Peshawar on the evening of April 24th, 1930, the city fell into nationalist hands. The police barricaded themselves in their stations and Congress volunteers took up the fundamental responsibility of the government: maintaining law and order. Despite the removal of Sir Norman Bolton following his mental collapse and the arrival of fresh leadership in the form of Evelyn Howell and Francis Wylie, the Frontier administration remained paralyzed.[5] For days the

[4] E.B. Howell (Foreign Secretary, Government of India) to Viceroy, 5 May 1930, Halifax Papers (IOR) C152/24.

[5] Sir Francis Vernier Wylie arrived in India in 1915 and served in the Indian Political Service from 1919 to 1938. Wylie, who was serving as Howell's deputy in the Government of India's Foreign Department in April 1930, did emergency duty in Peshawar until the end of 1930. He was appointed Governor of Central Provinces and Berar from1938-40, Political Adviser to the Crown Representative from 1940-41 and 1943-45, and served as the final British Governor of the United Provinces from 1945-47. Following his retirement he was appointed as the British Government's Director of the Suez Canal Company in 1948 (Unpublished Caroe Memoirs, Caroe Papers (IOR) F203/79).

British argued over the right response to their "loss" of Peshawar. More aggressive members of the administration, such as Olaf Caroe, argued that the British had sustained a massive blow to their prestige when they evacuated the city and that this "frontier shield" of the empire must be recovered at all costs.[6] Others, such as the acting Chief Commissioner, Charles Latimer, maintained that overly aggressive action would lead to a "bloodbath" on both sides.[7]

After two weeks of argument between and within the separate civil, military, and air authorities, the administration finally decided to retake the city in an early morning surprise attack. British and Indian troops moved into Peshawar at three in the morning on May 4th.[8] The police took possession of the local Congress and *Naujawan Bharat Sabha* offices and arrested a number of "leading agitators."[9] In line with the Frontier nationalists' commitment to Gandhi's principles of non-violence, the arrested offered no resistance and, as the Government's press communiqué proudly trumpeted, not a "single shot was fired" over the course of the day. Afridi Khassadars – tribal levies from the Khyber Agency – assisted the police, and the Government of India's Home Secretary

[6] Caroe was then serving as Chief Secretary of NWFP at the time. With Aubrey Metcalfe out of action following his injuries in the Peshawar "disturbances," Caroe was appointed Joint Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar District with Francis Wylie in May 1930. Writing in the 1970s, Sir Olaf Caroe likened the situation to the contemporary troubles in Northern Ireland, saying "somewhat similar arguments [to those espoused by the officials worried about a violent clash] have been deployed in Belfast and Londonderry more recently" (Unpublished Caroe Memoirs).

[7] Telegram from NWFP to Home Department, Government of India, 30 April 1930, National Archives of India (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930. Prior to Bolton's collapse, Latimer was serving as the Revenue Commissioner for the NWFP, which, in the pre-reformed administration, made him the Chief Commissioner's principal aide.

[8] See Lt.-Col. C.E. Bruce (Resident, Waziristan): Answers to Tribal Control and Defence Committee Questionnaire, 1931, Bruce Papers (IOR) F163/61; and Unpublished Caroe Memoirs.

[9] The Naujawan Bharat Sabha was a revolutionary organization founded at Lahore in 1924. The Sahba took issue with Gandhi's non-violent approach and considered any truce with the British to be "disastrous." Instead, the Sabha called for a "complete independent republic of labourers and peasants" along Marxist lines. Throughout the late 1920s the Sabha grew increasingly vocal in its support of the Soviet Union and Soviet communism and was involved with both the Meerut Conspiracy case and the Central Assembly bombing in the early 1930s. The vast majority of the organization's activity took place within the Punjab although it opened a Peshawar office in 1928 from which it disseminated anti-British tracts. It is likely that in the NWFP it was connected with the Marxist *Anjuman-i-Naujawanan-i-Sarhad* (See Chapter Four; S.K. Mittal and Irfan Habib, "Towards Independence and Socialist Republic: Naujawan Bharat Sabha, Part One," *Social Scientist*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1979), pp. 18-29; and O.P. Ralhan (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Political Parties: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh – Volume 26: Revolutionary Movements (1924-1930)*, (New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 2002), pp. 329-348).

noted with relief that the trans-border tribesmen who were in the city on personal business took little interest in the events going on around them.[10]

Despite the reoccupation, the Frontier administration and its new Chief Commissioner, Steuart Pears, who arrived in Peshawar on May 10th, continued to be deeply concerned about the state of the city and the province.[11] Peshawar remained tense. Relations between the population and the administration degenerated on May 19th when the British destroyed a "Martyr's Memorial" dedicated to those killed in April, and threatened to collapse on May 31st, when a British soldier accidentally shot and killed a mother and her two children while cleaning his gun at the Kabuli Gate.[12] A crowd soon gathered and was beaten back with a *lathi* (quarterstaff) charge by the police and a small contingent of troops.[13] Olaf Caroe, the Joint Deputy Commissioner, arrived on the scene and ordered that a shot be fired, which dispersed the angry crowd.[14] Caroe then asked the military commander to march his detachment to another point in the city. On the way this force of about 30 men encountered a crowd of some 2,000 in a narrow lane carrying the bodies of the woman and children killed earlier in the day in a funeral procession. The troops and the crowd came to close quarters in the lane and the crowd began "snatching"

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[10] Communiqué by Herbert Emerson (Home Secretary, Government of India), 5 May 1930, (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 11/III/1930.

[11] See "NWF Province Chief Commissioner Arrives" in *Civil and Military* Gazette (Lahore), 12 May 1930, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML); and S.E. Pears (Chief Commissioner, NWFP) to Viceroy, 12 June 1930, Halifax Papers C152/24. Pears, a long-time Frontier officer who served at Resident in Waziristan in the early 1920s, was employed as the Resident in the princely state of Mysore in April 1930. He had been slated to replace Bolton upon the latter's retirement in late 1930, but began his term early following Bolton's collapse (Viceroy to Sir Norman Bolton, 27 March 1930, Halifax Papers C152/24).

[12] *Report [With Evidence] of the Peshawar Enquiry Committee, Appointed by the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress* (Allahabad: Allahabad Law Journal Press, 1930), p. 34 (Hereafter "Patel Report").

[13] The accidental shooting took place at the site of the earlier shootings that month. To make matters worse, the soldier was a corporal with the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (KOYLI), the regiment responsible for the second round of shootings within Peshawar on April 23rd. The corporal was subsequently court-martialed (Telegram from NWFP to Political Department, Government of India, 31 May 1930, HOME (POL.) F 255/5/1930).

[14] Unlike his predecessor as Deputy Commissioner for Peshawar, Aubrey Metcalfe, there was nothing lackadaisical about Caroe's approach to his job. He regularly put in 16 hour days. As his former subordinate in Peshawar, K.P.S. Menon, wrote: "He was a man with a mission; he would not let sleeping dogs lie. Indeed, he thought that the dogs of the North-West Frontier never slept; they only pretended to sleep; and if the rulers were easy-going and lethargic, the dogs would pounce on them. Eternal vigilance was Caroe's watchword (Menon, *Many Worlds*, p. 93).

the rifles of the soldiers. Panicked, the troops fired 17 rounds and killed ten members of the crowd.[15] Although Caroe was exonerated by the Congress's subsequent investigation, the event, when combined with his generally hostile attitude to Frontier nationalism, made the rising officer a figure of hate among many nationalists, not the least of whom was Jawaharlal Nehru.[16]

Although Pears was deeply concerned that the shootings had "set matters back very seriously," the city remained remarkably calm in the wake of this second round of shootings.[17] Anxious to avoid any further violence, the British circulated notices conveying the Chief Commissioner's "profound regret and sincere sympathy," and promised financial restitution to the victims' families. Shops were closed and there were some minor demonstrations, but perhaps because the woman and children whom the British soldier had accidentally shot were Sikh rather than Muslim, there was little more unrest.[18] For the time being, Peshawar city was once again firmly in British hands.

The surrounding countryside was a different matter, however. The "Red Shirts," as the British now called Abdul Ghaffar Khan's Pathan nationalists, took over large swathes of rural Peshawar District while the British were preoccupied with taking back the city.[19] Nationalist sentiment was strongest in the Mardan and Charsadda subdivisions, the latter being home to Abdul Ghaffar. The then Chief Commissioner, Bolton, had ordered Abdul Ghaffar's arrest on April 24th and the nationalist leader was seized and

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[15] Unpublished Caroe Memoirs. See also Telegram from NWFP to Home Department, Government of India, and Associated Press, undated, HOME (POL.) F 255/5/1930, which puts the initial number of fatalities at three.

[16] Both the Government and Congress put the death toll at ten and 20 wounded (The Statement of Hakim Abdul Jalil Nadwi, son of Mohamed Abdullah, residence Mohalla Kazi-Khelan, Peshawar, in *Patel Report*, pp. 197-199. When attempting to remove Caroe from his post of Governor of the NWFP in 1947, Nehru wrote to the Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, citing the fact that "the part that Sir Olaf Caroe played as Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar in 1930 when there was large scale shooting and killing of peaceful demonstrators still evokes bitter memories" as a major reason to dismiss him (Nehru to Mountbatten, 4 June 1947, (IOR) R/3/1/170).

[17] Pears to Viceroy, 12 June 1930, Halifax Papers C152/24.

[18] Telegram from NWFP to Home Department, Government of India, and Associated Press.

[19] Despatch by H.E. Field Marshal Sir William Birdwood, Commander-in-Chief in India, on the Disturbances on the North West Frontier of India from 23rd April to 12th September, 1930, 14 November 1930, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA)WO 32/3526. The total population of Peshawar in this period was 121,864 (Mortimer Epstein, *The Statesman's Yearbook: Statistical and Historical Annual of the States of the World, 1937* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1937), p. 168.

held in the local Assistant Commissioner's bungalow. But since the papers connected with his case were in Peshawar the administration decided to remove Abdul Ghaffar to Risalpur and try him there.[20] As the hours went by on April 24th, a huge crowd surrounded the bungalow that held him. Sensing the urgency of the situation, Bolton sent the only political officer not on urgent duty, Captain Leslie Mallam, to move the prisoner, but warned his subordinate that "this must be effected without firing a shot. Any more shooting will bring the tribes down all along the frontier."[21]

Accompanied by a detachment of Guides Cavalry whose commanding officer offered the opinion that the orders not to shoot the crowd were "ridiculous," Mallam arrived at the scene and encountered the enormous crowd that surrounded the government residence in which Abdul Ghaffar was held.[22] The colonel who commanded the troop escort informed Mallam that he would occupy a nearby hill and train his machine guns on the crowd, but before the colonel could do this, Mallam decided to get back into the car and drive directly into the crowd, hoping to reach the building in which Abdul Ghaffar was held. Surrounded by the crowd, the local Red Shirt leadership, including Abdul Ghaffar's brother, Dr. Khan Sahib, spied the British officer and escorted the car through the crowd to the door of the bungalow.[23] After consulting with the local Assistant Commissioner, Mallam brought up a truck and asked Abdul Ghaffar to calm the crowd

[20] Report by Assistant Commissioner, Charsadda, to the Deputy Commissioner, Peshawar, 26 April 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930.

[21] Lt. Col. G.L. Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis and a Cassock* (London: Privately Published, 1978), p. 47, Mallam Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, Cambridge University (CSAS). When he was called up Mallam had been the Census Superintendent for the province and was working on the NWFP volume of the 1931 Census of India (see G.L. Mallam and A.D.F. Dundas, *Census of India, 1931: Vol. XV, North-West Frontier Province – Part I: Report and Part 2: Tables* (Peshawar: Government Stationary and Printing Office, 1933).

[22] The Guides, based at Mardan in the NWFP, and officially known as the 10th Queen Victoria's Own Frontier Force, was one of the most elite regiments in the Indian Army. It remained one of the few units not reorganized into a corps following the major retrenchment of the Indian Army in the early 1920s (see Anon, *The History of the Guides 1846-1922, Vol. I* (Aldershot: Gate and Polden Ltd., 1938); and Lt.-General Sir George MacMunn, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., D.S.O., *The History of the Guides 1922-1947, Vol. II* (Aldershot: Gale & Polden Ltd., 1950).

[23] See Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *My Life and Struggle: Autobiography of Badshah Khan as Narrated to K. B. Narang* (Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1969), pp. 103-104. Writing in the 1970s, Mallam recalled that at this point "we had slowed down to a halt when the mob became menacing. 'When I saw you being enclosed, and the crowd converging on you from right and left, I nearly opened fire,' the C.O. of the Guides admitted afterwards. If he had, I should not be telling the tale today" (Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, p. 48).

before getting in. The nationalist leader agreed, but only if his handcuffs were removed first. Mallam, reasoning that Abdul Ghaffar could be trusted since he came from "a good Pathan family," acquiesced and shook hands with nationalist leader, reminding him that this was a gentleman's agreement. He would be shot if he tried to escape. Mallam, who took a consistently sympathetic view of Frontier nationalism, recalled that:

> [Abdul Ghaffar] was as good as his word. He stood up, towering above the little forest of rifles, like a Hebrew prophet with his arms in the air. The small cavalcade, led by our car drove slowly through the vast mob, flanked by Red Shirts, while Ghaffar Khan shouted, 'I am being well treated and will soon be back among you. In the meantime there must be no violence, as Mahatma Gandhi has commanded.' He had complete control of the people, who listened to him in silence.[24]

Abdul Ghaffar was duly delivered to Risalpur and, within a day, convicted under the Frontier Crimes Regulation and sentenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment in the Gujrat Prison in the Punjab.[25]

Despite Abdul Ghaffar's removal, the Mardan and Charsadda subdivisions remained in state of upheaval throughout May. At the beginning of the month the NWFP Government reported that the activities of the "ostensibly non-violent but in ultimate intention revolutionary" Red Shirts, such as mass demonstrations and the organization of parallel courts, was going unchecked and police were unable to control these areas of the district.[26] The authorities decided to send in a moveable column of troops to "reduce" a number of villages "to order."[27] At the same time as the administration was taking steps to suppress nationalist activity in the rural areas of Peshawar, the movement spread to the administered districts of Kohat, Bannu, and Dera Ismail Khan. Faced with mounting opposition, the British pursued what they themselves admitted was a "purely repressive" policy of surrounding villages, arresting "agitators," seizing firearms and consigning

[24] Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, p. 48.

[25] Report by Assistant Commissioner, Charsadda, to the Deputy Commissioner, Peshawar.

[26] According to Mallam, who, beginning on May 14th, served as Acting Assistant Commissioner of the Charsadda Subdivision: "the law courts, usually a buzz of activity inside and out, remained silent and deserted. No crimes were reported to the police. There was no buying of stamps from the post office, no paying of land revenue. The opposition to authority was complete" (Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, p. 52).

[27] Telegram from NWFP to Foreign Department, Government of India, 8 May 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930.

these weapons to bonfires.[28] In the process a number of civilians and government officers were killed.[29]

Mallam, who was placed in charge of the Charsadda subdivision, attempted to deal with the uprising through peaceful means, encouraging the support of the "loyal" Khans and holding a jirga to discuss the people's grievances. Pears, however, labeled Mallam's decision to invite open criticism of the government was labeled 'disgraceful." A "large and burley" old Frontier-hand who had previously served as Resident in Waziristan, Pears was deeply ashamed of the collapse in authority in the NWFP. He believed that while he had been away from the Frontier serving as the British Resident at Mysore, the local administration had lost their way, becoming weak and pusillanimous. He openly blamed the Frontier cadre for Bolton's collapse.[30] Pears informed Mallam that inviting grievances against the Government would be interpreted as a sign of weakness and

[28] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation of the NWFP for the First Half of May 1930, (IOR) L P&J 12/20.

[29] Telegram from Norwef to Home Department, Government of India, 26 May 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930.

[30] Mallam claimed that Pears raked him over the coals for pursuing this policy, telling him that "insubordinate officials like you were responsible for Bolton's collapse. I intend to teach you a lesson." By all accounts (including that of the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon) Pears was an unpleasant man. In retirement Mallam also chalked the problems with Pears up to the divisions within the Indian Political Service and the Frontier Cadre, writing: "Apart from the tension, which is apt to fray tempers in times of crisis and the obsession with Sir Norman Bolton's 'disgrace,' there was another possible explanation for Pears' behavior: the composition of the Indian Political Service. This was 30% ICS and 70% military, the former enjoying more pay for the same work and equal responsibilities, until this discrepancy was corrected in 1925. The ICS, to which both Bolton and Pears belonged, considered themselves the bosses of India, and I was a mere Captain. It was far more distinguished to be plain "Mr'" (Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis,* pp. 49-53). For a fascinating and well researched exploration of the impact of bureaucratic status and infighting on the governance of India during the colonial period see Bradford Spangenberg's *British Bureaucracy in India: Status, Policy and the ICS in the Late 19th Century* (Delhi: Manohar, 1976), which serves as a riposte to the collective hagiography that characterizes much of the existing work on the ICS in which the service is imbued with an almost mythical dispassion and a sense of fair play as they rule over India with a benign dignity. Indian Civil Servants, Spangenberg argues, were not gods but men, and acted accordingly. More often than not civilians behaved in a manner and pursued policies that were as much self serving as altruistically duty bound. Examples of works which Spangenberg was writing against include L.S.S. O'Malley, *The Indian Civil Service, 1601-1930* (London: John Murray, 1931) and Sir Edward Blunt, *The I.C.S.: The Indian Civil Service* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937). The ICS history as hagiography *par excellence* is found in Philip Mason's (pseudo. Woodruff) valedictory and aptly titled *The Men Who Ruled India,* which is divided into two separate volumes: *The Founders* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1953) and, borrowing from Plato, *The Guardians* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1954). Mason's memorial to the service in which he served has many wonderful qualities and stands as an important and exceptional work.

ordered roadblocks set up and troops sent into the area.[31] With a policy of repression fully in place, the British had reasserted their authority throughout much of the settled districts by the end of the month. The administration believed that, for the time, Red Shirt activity had diminished.[32]

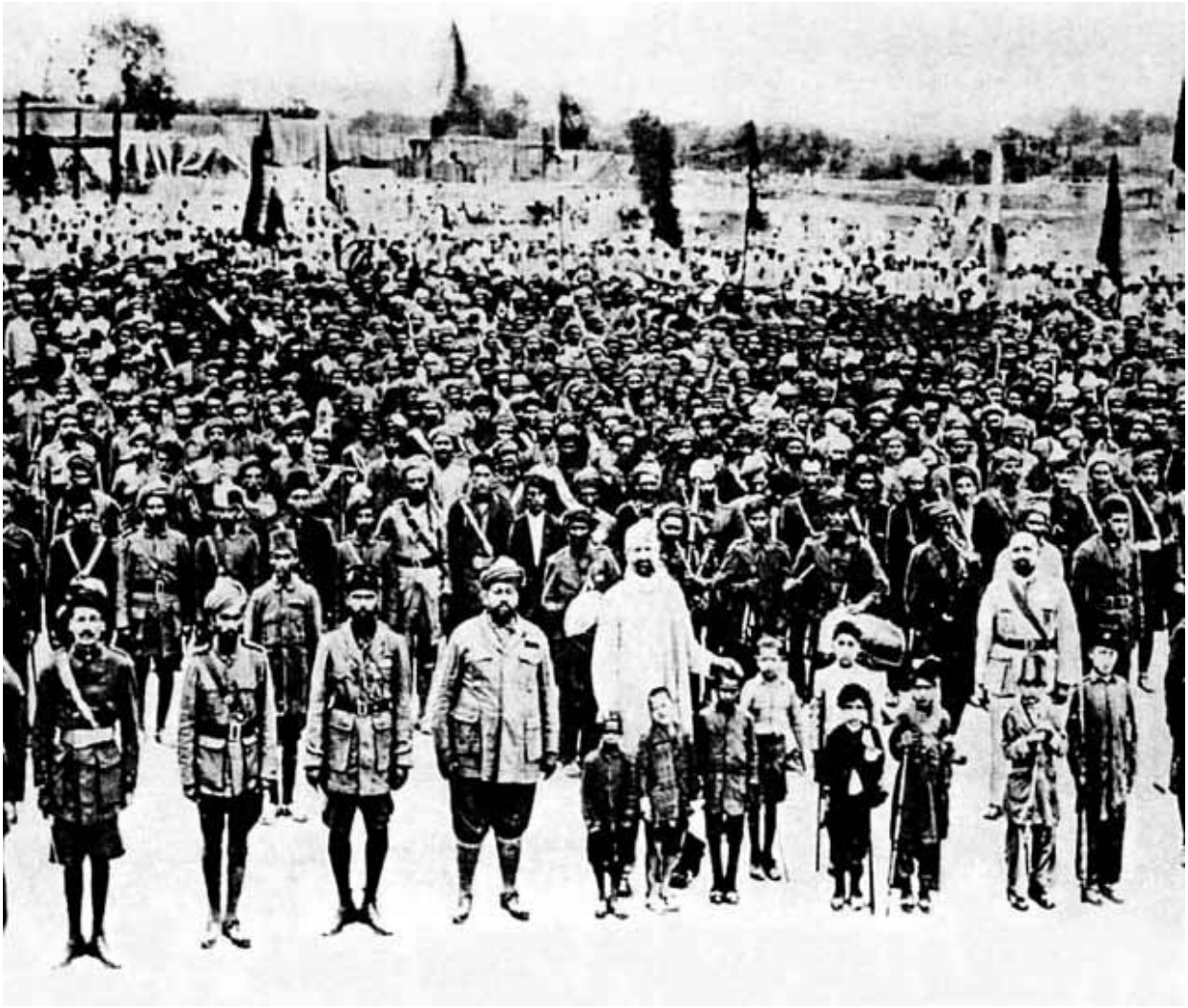

Illustration 6: Abdul Ghaffar Khan (in white) and Red Shirt Volunteers at Charsadda, c. 1931[33]

[31] Pears to Irwin, 12 June 1930.
[32] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation of the NWFP for the First Half of May 1930.
[33] Reproduced from *Patel Report*.

Throughout the month of May, the British grappled with the question of who, exactly, the Red Shirts and their allies were. What little attention the administration paid to nationalism on the Frontier before April 23rd had centered on the small but Marxist *Anjuman-i-Naujawanan-i-Sarhad*. Now they were confronted by a widespread rebellion throughout the province, one that appeared to be bent on the elimination of British rule. Having always assumed the real threat to their rule on the Frontier, and possibly over all of India, would come from an external enemy or proxy, such as Russia, Afghanistan, or the trans-border tribes, the British began to realize that they might be faced with a genuine nationalist movement on the Frontier.

Yet old habits were hard to break, and throughout this first phase of the nationalist rebellion on the Frontier the British vacillated between this new reality and their established shibboleths. The "red jackets" of the Khudai Khidmatgars and the hammer and sickle symbols used by the Anjuman, combined with a predilection towards viewing the source of all problems as external, led the administration to initially focus on the possibility of communist or Russian influence on the rebellion.[34] Evelyn Howell, the Indian Foreign Secretary who had flown to Peshawar in the midst of Bolton's collapse and then stayed on to assist the administration, had conflicting views on where the true root of the "disturbances" lay. A career political officer on the Frontier, Howell, had long worried about a potential Bolshevik invasion through the northern marches of the North-West Frontier.[35] He originally believed the revolt to be communist inspired. He wrote to the Viceroy, stating that "'these infernal 'Khudai Khidmatgaran' are now the chief difficulty here. We are trying to get the name 'Balshaveek' – which is really much more

[34]Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation for the First Half of February 1930, L P&J 12/20 and Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation of the NWFP for the First Half of May 1930.

[35] While serving as Resident in Kashmir in 1927, Howell had warned the Government of India of the possibility of an imminent Soviet Invasion through the small strip of incredibly mountainous and nearly impassable land that separated the USSR from Gilgit in the far North-West of India (E.B. Howell to Sir Denys Bray, 27 June 1927, (IOR) L P&S 10/1152). Earlier, however, W.J. Keen, who was the acting Chief Commissioner of the NWFP at the time, thoroughly discounted the possibility of invasion (W.J. Keen to Foreign Department, Government of India, 12 July 1926, L P&S 10/1152).

appropriate – to stick to them. They will then be easier to tackle."[36] By the end of the month Howell concluded that "Congress is the villain of the piece," but whether Congress had acted alone, or whether it was connected with the "Bolsheviks," was unclear.[37] Ultimately for Howell, the question of whether the "hand of Congress" acted alone was moot. For the disturbances were "undermining the Frontier bulwark" of the empire and therefore helping Russia regardless of funding or encouragement from Moscow.[38]

Others shared this fear. General Sir Sydney Muspratt, the once and future military secretary to the India Office, who had served as Rawlinson's "rat" in London during the controversy over Waziristan in the early 1920s, was then serving as Deputy Chief of the Indian General Staff. [39] Muspratt, like most Army officers, believed that upheaval in India and the Frontier could not help but encourage Afghan and Soviet efforts to undermine the British Raj.[40] Although the Viceroy was convinced that the new Afghan ruler, Nadir Khan, had disavowed the pro-Russian activities of his predecessor Amanullah, and "realized that his true interests lay in establishing real friendship with Great Britain and checking the advance of Russia," men like Muspratt still doubted the new King's intentions.[41] Given the situation in the NWFP, Muspratt believed that the

[36] E.B. Howell to Viceroy, 5 May 1930.

[37] Note by E.B. Howell, 24 May 1930, (NAI) HOME (POL.) F 206/1930.

[38] E.B. Howell to J. C. Walton (Foreign and Political Secretary, India Office), 28 May 1930, Walton Papers (IOR) D545/6.

[39] At any given time the India Office employed two Military Secretaries: one a civilian and one an officer in the Indian Army. Throughout this period S.K. Brown served as the civilian secretary and the notorious reactionary Field Marshal Sir Claude Jacob served as the military member. Muspratt replaced Jacob in 1931 and filled the role until 1933 when he returned to India to become the commanding officer of the military based in and around Peshawar. Upon relinquishing command in 1936 Muspratt returned to London where he once again served as Military Secretary in the India Office until 1941.

[40] See "North West Frontier of India with Regard to Defence": Typescript of Lecture Delivered by Sir Sydney Muspratt to the Imperial Defence College, 1931, Muspratt Papers (IOR) F223/82.

[41] Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, 13 March 1930, Halifax Papers C152/6. Afghanistan had only just emerged from a bitter civil war. The reigning King, Amanullah, was overthrown in January 1929 and thereafter the throne had passed to several hands, including the Tajik "Bandit King," Habibullah Ghazi, before power was finally seized by Nadir Shah, a relation to Amanullah who had been one of the ex-King's most competent military commanders, leading the Afghan invasion of British territory in the Khost campaign during the Third Anglo-Afghan War of 1919. The Afghan civil war was most likely a major contributor to the fact that Delhi and Simla were caught unawares about the growth of nationalism on the Frontier: all attention was aimed at the Afghan side of the border. The British were by and large pleased with Nadir's seizure of power as it meant that an ethnic Pathan would sit on the throne, rather than a Tajik.

British needed to keep a careful watch on the state of feeling in Afghanistan and among the trans-border tribes: "Our prestige is bound to be suffering at the present moment and it is at such times that things happen with startling rapidity." The General maintained that there were a certain number of Afghans "whose profession it is to fish in troubled water…behind them will be the Russian Legation."[42]

The Viceroy, Lord Irwin, was also concerned. He told the Labour Party Secretary of State for India, William Wedgwood Benn, that his anxieties centered on Abdul Ghaffar Khan, who he described as "a man of considerable wealth and some influence in the province," who was "imbued with socialistic and probably communistic ideas but is respected as he is apparently a genuine enthusiast."[43] Howell echoed this concern, citing unsubstantiated claims that Abdul Ghaffar was related by marriage with the Haji of Turangzai, a local tribal leader who was suspected of funneling Bolshevik money to the "Hindustani fanatics" in the province.[44] Irwin related to Benn that the objective of the Red Shirts was the organization of young laborers and peasants to combat "imperialism and capitalists." The Viceroy believed that the Red Shirts would shed their non-violent

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They were concerned that the presence of a "foreigner" would incite the tribes on the British side of the border to further violence (see Viceroy (Foreign and Political Department), to Secretary of State for India, 14 February 1929, (TNA) FO 371/13992). For a description of the civil war and British interests see "Note of the Rebellion on Afghanistan from 1st July 1929 to the Accession of Nadir Shah, 16th November 1929, FO 371/13992.

[42] Note by General Sir Sydney Muspratt, 24 April 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930 (Part 2).

[43]Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 11 June 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 11/III/1930. Irwin, a High Church Tory, and Benn, a war hero and former Liberal MP who defected to Labour in 1927 – inspired in large part by his longstanding distaste for Lloyd George – had an unusually good working relationship. In their correspondence Irwin was particularly frank with his Secretary of State and Benn gave the Viceroy a great deal of leeway in formulating and carrying out independent policies in this extremely tumultuous period of Indian history. Equally important was Benn's staunch support in the House of Commons of Irwin's policies, such as the Viceroy's 1929 statement on Dominion Status. A good example of the nature of their relationship is found in this exchange from Irwin in May 1930: "So I see you have shed Tom [Sir Oswald – the future British fascist leader] Mosley. I cannot think that this will be any irreparable loss. Somehow or other I have never felt that he was a very desirable member of a team or – I would add – of a Party!" (Viceroy to Secretary of State, 28 May 1930, Halifax Papers, C152/6). Churchill raised Benn to the peerage as Viscount Stansgate in 1942, and in this capacity he became the "authentic voice of liberalism" in the House of Lords. He was also the father of the politician Tony Benn (See Entry for "William Wedgwood Benn" in H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: From the Earliest Times to the Year 2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[44] Minute by E.B. Howell, 9 June 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 11/III/1930. The "Hindustani Fanatics" were a small colony of Wahabis resident in the Ambala region of the Frontier. The British waged a series of small campaigns against them in the mid-nineteenth century.

principles when the moment arose. Yet despite these fears about Abdul Ghaffar, the red uniform, and the occasional use of the hammer and sickle, Irwin admitted that "present information suggests that it is based on imitation rather than direct Soviet inspiration." There was no proof of financial support from Russia and the use of the symbols probably reflected the "communist tendencies" of Abdul Ghaffar, rather than the formal adoption of the "Communist creed or appreciation of its full aims and principles."[45] The Viceroy, however, would wait until a full report came from the Frontier administration to make his final conclusions about the nature of the threat.

The Chief Secretary of the NWFP, Lionel Jardine, had spent the month since the initial demonstrations investigating whether or not the Red Shirts were actually receiving aid from the Soviet Union.[46] He concluded that at first sight it could be thought that "signs of Communist instigation were to be discerned in the recent history of the North-West Frontier Province." Pamphlets carrying communist slogans had been published, communist symbols were used, and several of the Red Shirt leaders had spent time in Tashkent and other Soviet territory following the demise of the *Hijrat* in 1920.[47] Yet:

> At the same time there is no proof of Russian instigation or abetment of the disturbances on the Frontier. The origin of the propaganda appears to be within India…It is doubtful whether the communist emblems convey any true meaning to the people. They appear to have been adopted, in a spirit of imitation, as the badge of a nation that has overthrown autocratic rule…there is no evidence of Soviet instructions, and no evidence whatever of direct financial support from Bolshevik sources.[48]

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[45] Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 11 June 1930.

[46] Lionel Jardine, *They Called Me An "Impeccable Imperialist": Experiences of British India, 1914-1947* (Bombay: Himmat Publications, 1979). Jardine is a rather remarkable figure. A career Frontier officer, Jardine became a convert to the tenets of "Moral Rearmament," while on leave in Britain in the late 1930s. Championed by the Reverend Frank Buchman, Moral Rearmament was based around what it called "the Four Absolutes" (absolute honesty, absolute purity, absolute unselfishness and absolute love) and encouraged its members to be actively involved in political and social issues. One of the movement's core ideas was that changing the world starts with seeking change in oneself. Alcoholics Anonymous began as an offshoot of the movement. Jardine returned to India and a stint as Deputy Commissioner, Peshawar, intending to "live differently." On his occasional leaves, he lived in an ashram. He later became friends with Gandhi – all the while retaining his official posts in the Political Service. He served in the princely states throughout the Second World War and was fortunate in that he was eligible for his pension in 1947. He retired to England and remained deeply involved with the moral rearmament movement.

[47] For example: "Long Live Revolution: The Only Communist Weekly Paper of the Frontier Province," 25 March 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 11/III/1930.

[48] Express Letter from Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Home Dept., Simla, 12 June 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 11/III/1930.

These conclusions were quickly communicated to London.[49] Evidence was mounting that the current crisis on the Frontier was home grown. The administration was slowly coming round to the idea that this there was no connection to the Comintern.

That the rebellion on the Frontier might be the product of nationalist sentiment did not stop both the Frontier administration and the Government of India from continuing to paint the Frontier nationalists with a Bolshevik brush, however. Howell had urged this at the beginning of the disturbances and throughout 1930 it continued to serve their propaganda purposes.[50] In a revealing exchange with the Secretary of State for India, Irwin admitted:

> The name "Red Shirts" was purposefully introduced by the NWFP administration as a popular substitute for the name "Khudai Khidmatgaran," or "Servants of God." We obviously could not have used the latter phrase in official references, as it would have implied some kind of admission that we were dealing with an association of the pious and godly. Although it may be true that the Red Shirt movement was not inspired by the Bolsheviks…I think it served its practical purposes pretty successfully.[51]

Benn, a member of the Labour party, replied that he was skeptical of this approach and thought it unseemly. He was under the impression that the Red Shirt movement was "rather a rising against the squires and partaking of the character of village uplift." Yet, if force and coercion, under which the policy of vilifying the nationalists as Bolsheviks fell, worked, then "we must leave it at that." He remained concerned, however, about the effect the Government of India's "aggressive" campaign would have on home opinion, and especially within his own Labour party.[52]

Moreover, although there was no evidence that the Frontier nationalists were in any way affiliated with the Soviet Union or an international communist movement, members of the administration continued to harbor suspicions. Writing at the end of 1932

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[49] Minute by Government of India, 12 June 1930, HOME (POL.) F. 11/III/1930.

[50] E.B. Howell to Viceroy, 5 May 1930.

[51] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 16 August 1930, Halifax Papers C152/6.

[52] Secretary of State to Viceroy, 12 September 1930, Halifax Papers C152/6. This view of Abdul Ghaffar Khan was shared by many members of the Liberal and Labour parties in Britain. In his sympathetic 1931 book on Gandhi, the journalist and Liberal M.P., Robert Bernays, compared him to the grand old man of the Labour Party, George Lansbury: "Abdul Ghaffar Khan is a kindly, gentle and rather loveable man. As well think that old George Lansbury is a dangerous revolutionary as imagine that Abdul Ghaffar Khan is the relentless enemy of the Raj" (Robert Bernays, *The Naked Fakir* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1931), p. 328).

in the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* – which served essentially as the in-house journal of the Political Service – an anonymous Frontier officer wrote that despite the fact that there was no "direct evidence" of Bolshevik assistance, the fact remained that Lenin had stated that the "road to London lies through Kabul."[53] This, the officer and others argued, had to be borne in mind. Over the coming years, this ongoing belief assisted the administration in their insistence that Frontier nationalism was somehow separate from the All-Indian nationalist movement.

Concurrent with the administration's anxieties about Abdul Ghaffar's relationship with Bolshevism was the premise that the uprising on the Frontier was based on religious grievances. The problem, many argued, was not the impoverishment of the peasantry, lack of political and civil freedom, or the entire edifice of British rule, but *religious sensibilities*. Senior political officers, such as the former Resident in Waziristan, Sir William Barton, claimed that the nature of the Frontier's "perfervid Islam" made this the most probable source for unrest. For "nowhere in India is Islam so strong."[54] In particular, blame for the recent course of events on the Frontier was placed on the Child Marriage Restraint, or Sarda, Act.[55]

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[53] H.R.S., "Unrest in the Peshawar District, 1930-32", in the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 19, 4 (1932), p. 641. For a history of the Royal Central Asian Society, now known as the Royal Society for Asian Affairs, see Hugh Leach and Susan Maria Farrington, *Strolling About on the Roof of the World: The First Hundred Years of the Royal Society for Asian Affairs (Formerly Royal Central Asian Society)* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003). It was in fact Trotsky who made this remark at the 3rd International in 1920. Trotsky hoped to make this rhetoric a reality, but he was alone among responsible Soviet leaders in the 1920s (see Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed: Trotsky, 1879-1921* (London: Verso, 2003), p. 379; see also Zafar Imam, *Colonialism in East-West Relations: A Study of Soviet Policy Towards India and Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917-1947* (New Delhi: Eastman Publications, 1969)).

[54] Sir William Barton, "The Problems of Law and Order Under a Responsible Government in the North-West Frontier Province," in the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 19, 1 (1932), p. 6.

[55] Under pressure from Indian reformers, international bodies like the League of Nations, and those who argued that India's social practices made them unfit for home rule, such as Katherine Mayo in her book *Mother India* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co, 1929), the Central Legislative Assembly passed the Sarda Act with the support of Indian nationalists such as Gandhi in 1929 in an effort to discourage child marriage. The minimum age of marriage for girls was 14 and for boys at 16. It did not mention a minimum age of consent (See Geraldine Forbes, *The New Cambridge History of India, IV. 2: Women in Modern India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 83-91). In practical terms the Sarda Act had little impact on actual marriage practices in the NWFP for two reasons. First, it was never really enforced, as the Government was wary of offending Muslim "sensibilities." More importantly, however, was the fact that the NWFP had a pre-existing age of consent law, which placed the minimum age for a girl at 16.

In his initial report on the Peshawar "disturbances," the Inspector General of Police in the NWFP, F. C. Isemonger, argued that the unrest was "closely associated" with Congress's All-Indian Civil Disobedience movement that had commenced with Gandhi's Salt March to Dandi in April.[56] Isemonger was a policeman rather than a soldier or a "Political," and it is perhaps unsurprising that this man, who had ordered the second shootings on April 23rd, would believe that the causes of discontent lay closer to home rather than across the Khyber. Yet reflecting both the communal and sectarian lens through which the British often insisted on viewing Indian matters, and the British insistence that this was *different* from Gandhi's activities "down country," the inspector discounted any economic or political explanations for the unrest.[57] Instead, he placed the onus on the Sarda Act. [58]

Howell followed this line of thinking as well, and believed that "agitators" were representing the Sarda Act as an active interference with Islam. He argued that in particular, the rumor that the new law would require brides to undergo a medical inspection by a male physician or policeman caused disquiet throughout the Frontier.[59]

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[56] Following the Congress Party's decision to initiate a renewed program of civil disobedience in February, Gandhi commenced his "Salt Satyagraha" on March 12th, 1930. By marching 240 miles to Dandi on the Arabian Sea and then making salt, Gandhi challenged the Government's tax on salt, which made up roughly 4% of the Raj's revenue. Although this would not financially topple the British, the salt tax was nevertheless an important part of the cash-strapped Government's tax base and an emotive issue for a wide array of Indians, especially the poorest, who felt the tax most keenly. Following Gandhi's arrival at the sea on April 5th, Irwin commented to Benn that the march must have been a severe physical strain on the nationalist leader. For: "I was told that his blood pressure is dangerous and his heart is none too good, and I was also told a few days ago that his horoscope predicts that he will die this year, and that this is the explanation of his desperate throw. *It would be a very happy solution*" (Viceroy to Secretary of State, 7 April 1930, Halifax Papers C152/6). On May 5th the British arrested Gandhi. Although administrators such as Sir Malcolm Hailey, who was then serving as Governor of the United Provinces, hoped this would nip the movement in the bud, this was only the beginning of this phase of civil disobedience which would last until 1933 (See Sir Malcolm Hailey to Irwin, 25 April 1930, Halifax Papers C152/24).

[57] Stephen Alan Rittenberg's *Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Pakhtuns: The Independence Movement in India's North-West Frontier Province* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1988), the sole major work on the formation of the nationalist movement on the Frontier, concludes that economic displacement among the settled districts' small land owners was the principal contributor to the growth of nationalist and anti-British sentiment.

[58] Report by F. Isemonger (Inspector General Police, NWFP), 2 May 1930, (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 255/5/1930 (Part 2).

[59] Although this rumor appeared to be common currency throughout the Frontier, it bore no resemblance to the actual Sarda Act, which contained no provisions for personal inspections – medical or otherwise. For an investigation into the actual provisions of the Act see Sumita Mukherjee, "Using the

Howell was "almost inclined to believe that [Congress] brought on the Sarda Act to come into operation on the date which it did, deliberately" – to coincided with the launch of the All-Indian Civil Disobedience Campaign. As far as Howell was concerned, the decision to allow the Act on the Statute Books without the input from local communities was a monumental blunder.[60]

The British placed further blame on Muslim fears about the Sarda Act following the second phase of the "disturbances" of 1930: the Afridi invasion of the Peshawar District on the night of June 4th.[61] Quickly overrunning the western portions of the District, the Afridi invasion was a nightmare scenario for the British.[62] Just when they were beginning to believe that there were "clear signs" that the people are becoming tired of "agitation and that the peace loving majority are beginning to pick up the courage to resist the agitators," the pot was stirred once again by a tribal incursion.[63] Although many within the administration believed the tribes' actions stemmed from grievances over recent government interference in a dispute between Sunni and Shia factions among the neighboring Orakzai tribe, they also placed the onus on the Sarda Act. Predicting trouble at the end of May, the Viceroy noted that the trans-border tribes had been fed with "every form of lie about the Sarda Act, in regard to which they apt to vie themselves as the protectors of their subjected brethren under British law."[64] The Indian General Staff concurred with this assessment, noting that the only reason that this "religious appeal" did not turn into a "true preaching of *Jehad*" was due to the fact that no Muslim monarch, such as Afghanistan's Nadir Shah, was willing to declare a holy war. The Army

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Legislative Assembly for Social Reform: the Sarda Act of 1929," *South Asia Research*, 26, 3 (2006), pp. 219-233.

[60] Howell to Walton, 28 May 1930.

[61] The Afridi sections that invaded Peshawar in this period haled from the nearby Khyber agency and had amassed in the Khajuri plain, a region that adjoins the Vale of Peshawar on the East. At this time there were simultaneous unrest in other tribal areas, including Waziristan and Mohmands of Bajaur. See Chapter Five.

[62] See, for instance, General Staff Report by General Sir Sydney Muspratt, 27 May 1930, HOME (POL.) F 255/5/1930.

[63] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation of the NWFP for the First Half of June 1930, (IOR) L P&J 12/20.

[64] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 19 May 1930, Halifax Papers C152/6. See also Note by J. Walton to Findlater Stewart (Under Secretary of State for India) on the Afridi Situation and the Frontier Generally, 8 September 1930, (IOR) L P&S 12/3162.

leadership insisted also that, like 1919 and every other conflagration on the Frontier since 1849, the unrest was spawned by the tribesmen's belief that Britain was weak. This could only be dealt with by enhancing the Raj's prestige with showing a firm hand.[65]

Religious sentiment and concerns over the Sarda Act played an undoubted role in the growth of anti-British sentiment in 1929 and 1930, but by arguing that this was a *primary cause* of the unrest that swept the province, the British were once again ignoring the fact that this was a legitimate nationalist movement. The memoirs and reminisces of former nationalist volunteers make this clear.[66] Initially, from the Viceroy on down, the British administration clung to the belief that the grievances that motivated the Red Shirts and other protestors lay in mere rumors about a specific policy, which could, perhaps, be altered to ameliorate public opinion, rather than in the entire apparatus of British rule.[67] The administration never entirely jettisoned the view that rumors about the Sarda Act lay behind the upheaval, but as the situation continued to deteriorate throughout the summer, the British became increasingly aware of the fact that they were dealing with a full-fledged nationalist movement.

THE BRITISH RESPONSE

As the crisis continued on the Frontier, the incoming Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, Hamidullah, Nawab of Bhopal, proffered his advice to the Viceroy.[68] A

[65] Confidential General Staff Summary of Events in North-West Frontier Tribal Territory, 1st January 1930-31st December 1930, (IOR) L P&S 12/3170.

[66] See Mukulika Banerjee, *The Pathan Unarmed: Opposition &Memory in the North-West Frontier* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001) for interviews with former Khudai Khidmatgar (Red Shirt) volunteers, Abdul Ghaffar Khan's memoirs, and the numerous hagiographical works on Ghaffar Khan and Khudai Khidmatgar movement such as Muhammad Soaleh Korejo, *The Frontier Gandhi: His Place in History* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1993); G. L. Zutshi, *Frontier Gandhi: The Fighter, the Politician, the Saint* (New Delhi: National Publishing House, 1970); and Girdhari Lal Puri, *Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan: A True Servant of Humanity* (New Delhi: Congress Centenary Celebration Committee, 1985).

[67] This emphasis on the Sarda Act was also related to the long-standing belief that British interference with religion had been a root cause of the "Indian Mutiny" of 1857. For more on the policy of non-interference see Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[68] A graduate of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh, Hamidullah Khan was involved in Muslim politics during the First World War, and reportedly donated Rs. 2000/- to support a newspaper ran by the future *Khilafat* leader, Muhammad Ali. Yet as Chief Secretary of Bhopal, Hamidullah

proponent of Muslim solidarity in order to combat Congress, the Nawab suggested that "wicked rumours" about the Sarda Act were clearly a source of the disturbances on the Frontier. The Viceroy should immediately remove the application of the Act from the province – a decision Irwin was already mulling.[69] The Nawab insisted that the problem went beyond this. The *root* of the trouble lay in the lack of reforms on the Frontier. As long as the British denied the NWFP the same form of government allowed in the rest of the subcontinent, they would fall victim to "Congress propaganda." The Nawab suggested that the Viceroy announce the extension of reforms to the province at the earliest possible opportunity. The effect would be "electrical." Only this would pacify the Frontier and effectively "checkmate" Congress.[70]

Senior Politicals like Barton still insisted that "the Frontier is not India," but as it dawned on both the central and local administrations that their attempts to keep the NWFP in perpetual purdah – separated from the rest of India – had failed, and that an actual nationalist sentiment had taken hold in the province, the big question was, as the Nawab put it: how to checkmate the nationalists? As they often did when confronting Congress, the British responded with a combination of carrot and stick. Regarding the carrot, the first order of business was internal reforms within the administration. Howell acknowledged that the civil administration had failed many people and that it was now

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acquiesced to British requests for support during the *Khilafat* movement and worked to undermine support at his *alma mater*, Aligarh, for Gandhi's Non-Cooperation campaign in 1921. Ascending the throne in 1926, he immediately became involved in All-Indian politics, joining the standing committee of the Chamber of Princes, over which he presided as Chancellor from 1931 to 1932 and from 1944 to 1947. During both terms he sought to give the princes a larger role in India's constitutional reforms. During the London Round Table Conferences of 1931-32, he supported princely entry into a federation with British India as long as there were guarantees of princely rights and autonomy. At the same time he attempted to forge a united front among Muslim representatives, and launch a centrist party of Indian moderate politicians. Although these efforts failed, he remained a trusted source of advice for the British. Ruling over a majority Hindu state, he abdicated and immigrated to Pakistan in 1947 (See Entry for "Sir (Muhammad) Hamidullah Khan" in Matthew and Harrison (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*). See also Ian Copland, *The Princes of India in the Endgame of Empire, 1917-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

[69] Frightened of how the Sarda Act would play out among India's Muslims, the Viceroy was planning on soft pedaling the Act as much as possible. As he told Benn, "there is no question that [the Sarda Act] is having a dangerous effect upon Moslem mentality, who cannot forget that the Prophet of sacred memory himself married a child of nine" (Viceroy to Secretary of State, 14 May 1930, Halifax Papers C152/6).

[70] His Highness the Nawab of Bhopal to the Viceroy, 30 May 1930, Halifax Papers C152/24.

time for real "generosity" over taxation and crop failures.[71] Yet Howell, the lifelong Frontier officer, could not contemplate the extension of full political reforms to the province.

Revealingly, the first high ranking member of the Government of India to suggest the expansion of reforms to the NWFP was the Indian Home Secretary, Herbert Emerson, a veteran not of the Frontier, but the Punjab, which had enjoyed the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms since 1921. Emerson agreed that a constructive program should be prepared to assist education, medical services, scientific agriculture, and veterinary dispensaries. The Government of India would have to foot the bill but he believed that the investment would be "an excellent one." He went further than Howell and the Political Service, however. Emerson thought that the introduction of elected municipal boards, as Howell suggested, were but half measures. The people of the Frontier believed that there was "insufficient reason" for withholding reforms. Moreover:

> The movement for constitutional reform in that province has therefore received a strong and perfectly legitimate impetus from outside with the result that it is impracticable to regard the problem as a parochial one.

Unsurprisingly for an official who had spent his career in the multi-communal Punjab, the Indian Home Secretary tied his argument for full political reforms to the wider All-Indian question of communal relations, reasoning that "as soon as it is known that a reasonable measure of reforms will be given to the province not only will internal influences favourable to Government come into operation but Muhammadan influence outside the province will be exerted in favour of constitutional methods."[72]

The Viceroy agreed with Emerson, and advised the India Office that an announcement should be made that the "the natural claims of the province in the constitutional field" would be viewed with sympathy and be included in discussions at the forthcoming Round Table Conference in London.[73] Thus, in a sign of the times, in

[71] Note by E.B. Howell, 24 May 1930.

[72] Note by Herbert Emerson (Home Secretary, Government of India), 26 May 1930, HOME (POL.) F 206/1930. Emerson's argument mirrors that made by the Nawab of Bhopal in his letter written at the same time to the Viceroy, in that it emphasizes the impact that Muslim India would have upon a reformed government in the NWFP and vice versa.

[73] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 31 May 1930, (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 275/30 KW.

which the British reasoned that all future reforms must fall in line with the "protection" of India's minorities, reforms should be extended to the NWFP.[74] This, however, would transpire in large part as a gesture towards "Muslim India."[75]

By June the Frontier administration also began to believe that the upheaval on the Frontier was neither fleeting nor the sentiments behind it shallow and that they now faced the problem of creating an atmosphere in which the peasantry accepted the "administration as before."[76] Pears, the Chief Commissioner, was particularly worried about the aid and comfort locals peasants were providing gangs of raiding Afridis.[77] Moreover, they seemed to be doing it out of real affection rather than compulsion or fear of reprisals. Irwin found this development "most disturbing."[78] In order to combat what had become a small scale war, Pears, though a reactionary at heart, called for the extension of reforms to the NWFP. He argued that the Pathan's "natural arrogance" made reform necessary, as he would compare his lot to the reforms already enjoyed by the "less competent" inhabitants of other provinces. Pears even admitted that Abdul Ghaffar's movement encapsulated legitimate grievances against the large landowning Khans, especially in the Charsadda subdivision. Pears pointed out, however, that the nationalists lacked the courage to tackle the worst social evil among the local population: their "addiction to sodomy"![79]

Slowly, over the course of 1930 and 1931, the local administration and the Government of India developed a program for political reforms on the Frontier.[80] Yet throughout this period the carrot of constitutional advancement for the NWFP was more

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[74] The Liberal Secretary of State for India, William Wedgwood Benn, believed – presumably in all sincerity – at this point that Britain must stay in India as long as possible to protect the Muslim population from a "Hindu Raj" (Secretary of State to Viceroy, 5 June 1930, Halifax Papers C152/6).

[75] For an excellent discussion of what can only be described as a policy of "divide and rule" regarding India's Muslims in the interwar period, see David Page's *Prelude to Partition: Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control, 1920-1932* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

[76] Pears to Viceroy, 12 June 1930.

[77] Howell to Walton (Enclosed Telephone Conversation with Mr. Pears, 14 August 1930), 16 August 1930, Walton Papers D545/6.

[78] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 16 August 1930, Halifax Papers C152/6.

[79] Confidential Letter from The Chief Commissioner, NWFP to the Foreign Secretary, Government of India, 13 February 1931, (NAI) HOME (POL.) F 45/V/31.

[80] See Government of India Statement, 30 December 1931, (NAI) HOME (POL.) F 123/32. For more on the extension of reforms to the NWFP see Chapter Five.

than balanced by the stick of the Government's use of brute force to suppress the rebellion on the Frontier. As Howell put it to the Viceroy the day after British forces retook Peshawar: "I think the *lathi* is the real remedy."[81] This remained the fundamental British view over the coming years. The Frontier was a violent place and force spoke louder than words or policy gestures. The Frontier, with its unique circumstances, was where the British met the nationalist challenge with brute force.

The policy of violent repression began in May 1930 with the introduction of military units throughout the settled districts and the indiscriminate aerial bombing of any tribesmen thought to be menacing the Peshawar District.[82] Although most areas were "pacified" by early June, the influx of Afridi tribesmen claiming to be "liberators" at that time led to major military operations taking place throughout the settled districts. The ordinary administration of the province once again came to a standstill and all low level officials in the police and revenue departments fled to Peshawar. The Red Shirts began demonstrating once more in the Charsadda subdivision and the picketing of liquor shops recommenced. There were massive arrests.[83] In August the administration declared martial law and began encircling villages and seizing suspected "agitators" and firearms.[84] Later that month, police fired upon a demonstration in Bannu District, killing over 70 protestors.[85]

By the beginning of autumn, the Indian Army and Royal Air Force drove the Afridi and other tribal *lashkars* back into the hills.[86] Martial law remained in effect, however, and the civil administration remained holed up in the large towns.[87] The Charsadda subdivision was still the epicenter of the revolt, and thus the focus of

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[81] E.B. Howell to Viceroy, 5 May 1930.

[82] Telegram from NWFP to Foreign Department, Government of India, 6 June 1930, HOME (POL.) F 255/5/1930.

[83] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation of the NWFP for the First Half of August 1930, L P&J 12/20.

[84] Secretary of State to Viceroy, 14 August 1930, Halifax Papers C 152/6.

[85] See Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam, and Nationalism: Muslim Politics in the North-West Frontier Movement, 1937-47* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 33.

[86] See Despatch by H.E. Field Marshal Sir William Birdwood, Commander-in-Chief in India, on the Disturbances on the North West Frontier of India from 23rd April to 12th September, 1930.

[87] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation in the NWFP of the Second Half of December 1930, L P&J 12/20.

retaliatory measures by the British. It is crucial to note that throughout this period, the Red Shirt volunteers remained overwhelmingly non-violent and stuck to their Gandhian principles.[88] A major exception occurred in February 1931, however, when two attempts were made on life of the Assistant Commissioner for Charsadda, Captain H.A. Barnes.[89] Likely motivated by the policy of violent suppression carried out by the administration, the would-be assassin was tried under the "Murderous Outrages Regulation," and sentenced to death despite the fact that his intended victim survived. Relations deteriorated further in the wake of this execution.[90]

As the Frontier situation worsened, the All-Indian political situation intervened in March of 1931. Exhausted, Congress and the Government called for a truce in the Civil Disobedience program, and, following the terms of the Delhi Pact, Abdul Ghaffar Khan and most other political prisoners in NWFP were released from prison.[91] The British lifted martial law. The nationalist movement gained wind in its sails with the return of Abdul Ghaffar, now known as the "Frontier Gandhi." He attracted crowds numbering in the thousands everywhere he went in the province. By the end of March the numbers of

[88] See Banerjee, *The Pathan Unarmed*.

[89] See Unpublished Memoirs of Mrs. H.A. Barnes, Collected Indian Political Service Memoirs (IOR) F 226/1; and Charles Chevenix Trench, *Viceroy's Agent* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987), p. 53.

[90] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation in the NWFP for the Second Half of February 1931, (IOR) L P&J 12/32; and Unpublished Memoirs of Sir John Dring, Indian Political Service Memoirs (IOR) F 226/8. Dring, the Duty magistrate for the execution, and Barnes' (who took up duties in Peshawar) successor as Assistant Commissioner in Charsadda, believed that "the invocation of the outdated law was unwise and bound to aggravate anti-government feeling."

[91] Government of India Statement, 30 December 1931. The Delhi Pact, or Gandhi-Irwin Pact, was an agreement reached between M.K. Gandhi and Lord Irwin on March 5th 1931, after months of political impasse as a result of Gandhi's Civil Disobedience Campaign. The agreement stipulated that in exchange for Gandhi suspending Civil Disobedience and agreeing to attend the next London Round Table Conference, the Government would undertake to permit peaceful picketing in favor of purchasing Indian goods, release political prisoners not found guilty of violent crimes, revoke the numerous declarations of emergency then employed throughout India, and lift bans on most political parties ("Gandhi-Irwin Pact (1931)" in Parshotam Mehra, *A Dictionary of Modern Indian History, 1707-1947* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 259-260). The talks between Gandhi and the Viceroy leading up to the pact inspired Winston Churchill's notorious comments to a local Conservative Party meeting: "It is alarming and also nauseating to see Mr. Gandhi, a seditious middle temple lawyer, now posing as a fakir of a type well known in the east, striding half-naked up the steps of the Viceregal palace, while he is still organizing and conducting a defiant campaign of civil disobedience, to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor" (Quoted in Martin Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1991), pp. 499-500). See also Arthur Herman *Gandhi and Churchill: The Epic Rivalry That Destroyed an Empire and Forged Our Age* (New York: Bantam, 2008).

volunteers enlisted in his Red Shirt organization far exceeded the members in the summer of 1930.[92] Both the civil and military authorities on the Frontier believed that the Red Shirts remained a distinctly dangerous organization. But Abdul Ghaffar was now federating with Congress and the administration's hands were tied by the truce agreed to in New Delhi.[93]

During this interregnum, British control over the rural areas of the province collapsed, to be replaced by Abdul Ghaffar's Red Shirts, their numbers now swollen to over 30,000.[94] Caroe, the Joint Deputy Commissioner for Peshawar District, warned that the vast bulk of the peasantry was simply ignoring their taxes and that the Government faced revenue arrears in the neighborhood of Rs. 10 or 12 lakhs (£666,000 to £800,000). Moreover, there was a total breakdown in law and order, or as Caroe put it, an "irrecoverable, and a permanent increase in heinous crime." The nationalists were calling the tune and "nothing short of the removal of some of the leading agitators will enable the District authorities to begin to cope with the situation." Caroe, whose aggressive stance towards the nationalists went hand in hand with his paternalistic instincts towards the Pathans, urged immediate action against Abdul Ghaffar Khan.[95] Caroe was told to wait.

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[92] See Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation in the NWFP for the Second Half of March 1931, L P&J 12/32. An intelligence report at this time observed that "whereas in 1930, just before the suppression of the Youth League and other organizations, the total number of Khudai Khidmatgars was estimated at something over 2,500; it is believed that their total number has now reached 13,000" (Report from Deputy Inspector General of Police, Intelligence Branch, NWFP (B.C.A. Lawther) to the Director, Intelligence Bureau, Home Department (H. Williamson), 24 April 1931, (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part I)).

[93] Letter from Headquarters (Northern Command) to Headquarters (Peshawar District), 23 June 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part I).

[94] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation in the NWFP for the First Half of June 1931, L P&J 12/32; and Record of Conference held at Gorton Castle (Secretariat Building, Simla) on 22 June 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part I).

[95] Copy of Memorandum from the Deputy Commissioner, Peshawar (Caroe) to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, NWFP, 5 May 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part I). Caroe argued that the Red Shirt leadership should not be prosecuted under the Indian Penal Code, but under the Frontier Crimes Regulation, stating "I do not advocate prosecutions under [the Indian Penal Code]. These lead to prolonged trials and are likely to cause reactions which will be difficult to control. Moreover, Abdul Ghaffar Khan and other figures have been clever enough to interlard their public utterances with sentiments of non-violence and even in private with professions of a desire to cooperate with Government. In other words they have kept close to the margin of the law." Ironically, the Frontier Crimes Regulation, which Caroe suggested, was one of the fundamental grievances for Frontier nationalist.

Abdul Ghaffar was watching his words and giving the Government little fodder for charges of sedition.[96]

Incredulous at being held hostage to All-Indian politics, other members of the Frontier administration pleaded with the Government of India to give them a free hand with the "Red Shirt revolutionaries."[97] But, encouraged by the new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, Pears cooperated with the Government, deciding to stand pat until Abdul Ghaffar provoked him into action, something the nationalist leader was keen to avoid.[98] Howell thought the whole situation was absurd, telling his opposite number in the India Office:

> As regards Abdul Ghaffar you know of course that what has happened in the North West Frontier Province has been allowed to happen solely on account of all-India considerations. The latest accounts show that the Red Shirt movement has attained to very dangerous dimensions, and there seems to be some reason to think that Abdul Ghaffar is going off his head. [99]

Yet the alliance between Congress and Abdul Ghaffar's movement grew stronger over the course of the summer, despite numerous reports that the union was on the cusp of breaking apart.[100] Numerous Congress leaders visited the Frontier, including Gandhi's son, Devidas, who visited the province in July.[101] The local Frontier intelligence bureau noted that as long as the Red Shirts enjoyed the freedom and power afforded them by the Delhi Pact, there was little hope of British law being restored and the high possibility of a "widespread conflagration."[102]

Their hands tied, the central and NWFP governments worked on a reforms program throughout the spring and summer of 1931. Based on proposals hammered out at the London Round Table Conference the previous winter, a committee, chaired by the

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[96] Telegram from Viceroy (Lord Willingdon) to Secretary of State (William Wedgwood Benn), 29 June 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part I).

[97] Telegram from Norwef to Foreign Department, 10 July 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part I).

[98] Record of Conference held at Gorton Castle (Secretariat Building, Simla) on 22 June 1931.

[99] Howell to Walton, 16 July 1931, Walton Papers D545/6.

[100] See, for example, North West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 25, for the Period Ending 25th June 1931, (IOR) L P&S 12/3141

[101] North West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 30, for the Period Ending 30th July 1931, L P&S 12/3141.

[102] North West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 32, for the Period Ending 12th August 1931, L P&S 12/3141.

Home Member of the Viceroy's Council, Sir Harry Haig, concluded that the NWFP should become a full Governor's province, with exact equality with the other provinces of India. In the settled districts law and order would be a provincial subject, while "watch and ward" over the tribal areas would remain under the auspices of the central government, with the Governor (formerly Chief Commissioner) of the province supervising the trans-border tracts in his role as Agent to the Governor-General.[103]

The Haig Committee's report was released at the end of June 1931, but there was a deep suspicion that this was too little, too late. In a sense the Frontier administration had come full circle. Although the publication of the report might "cut the ground from under the feet" of the Frontier nationalists, the administration worried that the social and economic grievances rather than political reform were the real problem. It was therefore too optimistic to think that the promise of reforms would have any real effect on the Red Shirt "agitation." The intelligence services in Peshawar reported that they would have a much better idea of the nature of Frontier grievances following Pears' meeting with Abdul Ghaffar, which was scheduled for July 30th.[104]

The Chief Commissioner's meeting with Abdul Ghaffar proved the administration's prediction correct. Although it was a friendly meeting, the nationalist leader was true to his overall program of expelling the British from the Frontier. Abdul Ghaffar informed Pears that he regarded the Haig Committee's proposals to be only "paper reforms" that did little to address the economic and social grievances inspired by British rule on the Frontier.[105] The tenor of this meeting did much to convince the already persuadable administration that they were dealing with a revolutionary organization. Abdul Ghaffar might not be supported by the Comintern, but this, they reasoned, did not make his program any less revolutionary or "socialistic." Benn, the outgoing Labour Secretary of State, still believed that Abdul Ghaffar was a "sort of village Hampden

[103] *Report of the North-West Frontier Subjects Committee, 1931* (Calcutta: Government of India Central Publication Branch, 1931), NMML.

[104] North West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 30, for the Period Ending 30th July 1931.

[105] North West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 31, for the Period Ending 6th August 1931, L P&S 12/3141.

trying to inaugurate a better social order against 'grasping and privileged landlordism.'"[106] Moreover, since the nationalist leader was himself a landlord, Benn thought it highly unlikely that he would wish to see a peasant revolt.[107] Yet this view was in a distinct minority, and the "men on the spot" continued to be seized by the specter of revolution.

Those who wished to deal a harsh blow to the Red Shirt movement moved a step further to their goal on September 9th, when Pears died in a bizarre fall from a cliff while taking his evening stroll near the NWFP's summer capital at Nathiagali.[108] A month before, the Viceroy had observed that the Red Shirt movement was becoming a "serious danger." He doubted that Pears, who due to his taciturn manner and preference for personal isolation, was now known by "all and sundry" as the "Chief Commissioner in purdah," was up to the task of dealing with them. The North-West Frontier was India's "danger point" and Willingdon, along with Howell, believed that Pears had lacked the

[106] Benn was replaced as Secretary of State for India by the Conservative politician, Sir Samuel Hoare, on August 25th, 1931, as part of the Cabinet reshuffle that accompanied the collapse of Ramsay MacDonald's second Labour ministry that month. The outgoing Labour cabinet, which was a minority government, was unable to agree upon proposals to cut public expenditure. The Prime Minister, MacDonald, submitted his resignation to King George V on August 24th 1931.The King persuaded MacDonald that it was his duty to form a new government to address the financial crisis. The original idea was that the "National Government" would be free to draw upon the talents of members of all parties, so that it would represent the nation as a whole rather than being a coalition of parties like those which had existed between 1915 and 1922. However as the main body of the Labour Party refused to co-operate, the government comprised members from MacDonald's small group of National Labour supporters, the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party (Philip Williamson, *National Crisis and National Government: British Politics, the Economy and Empire, 1926-1932* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). John Hampden (1595-1643) was a principal Parliamentary leader in the English Civil War.

[107] Private Letter from Benn to Willingdon, 26 June 1931, L PO 5/23. Willingdon, who was far less conciliatory with the nationalists than his predecessor, Irwin, argued that this was not the case. Abdul Ghaffar was interested in neither reforms nor societal uplift, but "personal notoriety." A professional proconsul, Willingdon took an incredibly jaundiced view of Indian nationalism in all its forms. This often blinded him to the many legitimate grievances that men like Abdul Ghaffar represented (Private Letter from Willingdon to Benn, 6 July 1931, L PO 5/23).

[108] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation in the NWFP for the First Half of September 1931, L P&J 12/32. Pears, who had been recently knighted, was alone when he fell off the precipice, and the circumstances of his demise remain somewhat of a mystery. In their memoirs, neither Mallam nor Caroe believed that the death was a result of violence or suicide. Caroe, however, believed that like Bolton the strain had been too much for Pears, "and that he had had a sudden seizure while out for a walk on a precipitous path" (Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, and Unpublished Caroe Memoirs).

capacity to roll out the new reforms and fully undermine the nationalists.[109] These concerns now moot, Pears was succeeded as Chief Commissioner by an "Army Political," Lt. Colonel Ralph Griffith. A "small, active wiry man, fine horseman, athlete, very good shot and tennis player," Griffith was then serving as Resident in Waziristan.[110] Unlike the distant Pears, Griffith was universally popular among the Frontier cadre. From his perch in Simla, Howell believed that the situation in the NWFP would "no doubt improve" under Griffith's watch.[111]

For many officers on the Frontier, "improvement" meant suppressing the Red Shirt movement with force and then introducing reforms in the wake of this action. Few now believed that reforms alone could counter Abdul Ghaffar's movement. Lawther, the intelligence chief on the Frontier, noted that:

> The basic reason why the Red Shirt Movement will not die out but will have to be repressed is that it is founded on the natural desire of the lower classes to obtain power over the upper classes...The real backers of the movement have gained too much in prestige and more material ways to be willing voluntarily to retire again into obscurity.[112]

He concluded that the movement was revolutionary and must be stamped out. It was clear that Griffith was more inclined towards this approach than his predecessor. Moreover, the Viceroy, and the Government of India believed that the only way to preserve British rule on the Frontier would be violent repression and mass arrests, followed by the introduction of wide ranging reforms.[113] The British hand was stayed, however, by the still-intact terms of the Delhi pact. But, this tentative truce was breaking down and before the year was out the Frontier administration, with the blessings of the Government of India, would move against the nationalists.

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[109] Private Letter from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 10 August 1931, L PO 5/23. Willingdon initially suggested that Sir Francis Humphrys, a veteran of Baluchistan and the former Minister to Kabul, be recalled from his position as British High Commissioner in Iraq.

[110] Unpublished Caroe Memoirs.

[111] Howell to Walton, 17 December 1931, Walton Papers D545/6.

[112] North West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 40, for the Period Ending 14th October 1931, L P&S 12/3141.

[113] Private Letter from Secretary of State (Sir Samuel Hoare) to Viceroy, 2 November 1931, L PO 5/23.

CONCLUSION

As the dust settled from the Peshawar "disturbances" on April 23rd 1930, the Frontier administration, which was run by men who had spent their entire careers in either Baluchistan or the NWFP, was shaken to its core. But rather than assume that the region was in fact similar to the rest of India and that the province-wide revolt was the product of legitimate political and socio-economic concerns, the Frontier administration as a whole returned to their well worn ideological paths: the problem lay not with the common cultivator or even small urban merchant. Rather, the source of the disturbances lay outside the province and over the Khyber, in Soviet propaganda and communist perversions. Although this view rapidly fell apart when confronted by numerous contrary facts, the administration still denied that the situation on the Frontier bore a resemblance to the nationalist movement elsewhere in India. Instead, they argued that the Pathan's religious sentiments and even fanaticism stood as the root of the rebellion. The Sarda Act, conceived in the Central Legislature and supported by Congress, was therefore blamed.

Although most officers concluded that this was a legitimate nationalist movement by the summer of 1930, they continued to cling to the ideas that underwrote their earlier assumptions. Veteran Frontier hands like Howell argued that the Pathans would only understand violence. Although some officers, like Pears, realized that violence need not be the only answer, the fact remained that the first calls for a non-violent response to the people's grievances came not from members of the Frontier cadre, but from those outside of the Political Service, like the Punjab ICS veteran, Herbert Emerson.

The Frontier cadres' long-standing inclinations towards violent repression were held in check by wider All-Indian concerns throughout 1931, but with the collapse of the Delhi Pact at the end of the year, the NWFP administration returned to form and struck at the Red Shirts. As Gandhi's Civil Disobedience campaign rocked India, the years 1932 and 1933 witnessed a level of Government sponsored violence and retribution not witnessed in the rest of the subcontinent. Assuming that the Frontier was different and still sealed off from events "down country" in the rest of India, the military and police

conducted an exceedingly brutal campaign on the Frontier. Ironically, this policy, premised on the separateness of the Frontier, would be instrumental in bringing British policy in the NWFP to the attention of Indian nationalists.

CHAPTER FIVE:
"THE FORBIDDEN LAND":
THE BRITISH, FRONTIER NATIONALISM, AND CONGRESS, 1931-1934

On Christmas Eve 1931, Indian police battalions, accompanied by units of the Indian Army and the Royal Air Force, entered Peshawar and all other urban centers of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) in order to arrest the leadership of the regional nationalist movement. By Christmas morning the Red Shirt leader, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, his brother, Dr. Khan Sahib, and numerous other nationalist leaders had been arrested and deported from the Province in a special train. Meanwhile, military columns spread throughout the NWFP, marching at night, and rounding up entire villages in dawn raids.[1] These raids, carried out on a day which, as the then Deputy Commissioner for Peshawar, Olaf Caroe, put it, "nobody, however suspicious, would expect a British authority to proceed to stringent action," constituted the first salvo in a two-year campaign of attrition against the nationalist movement on the North-West Frontier.[2]

Over the course of 1932 and 1933 the British authorities on the North-West Frontier attempted to smash the nationalist movement on the Frontier, the Khudai Khidmatgars, or as the British referred to them, the "Red Shirts," with a level of state supported violence not witnessed in the rest of India. These "excesses," as the British euphemistically called them, exceeded those in other areas of India as a result of the British belief that the North-West Frontier constituted an area separate from the rest of India.[3] The Frontier was, as one senior political officer put it: "not India, whether you look at it from the geographical, ethnographic, or historical standpoint."[4] They argued that Pathan culture and religion, combined with the peculiar strategic importance of this

[1] North-West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 1, for the Period Ending 7th January 1932, India Office Records (IOR), L P&S 12/3141.

[2] Unpublished Caroe Memoirs, Caroe Papers (IOR) F203/79.

[3] Letter from H.W. Emerson (Secretary, Home Department, Government of India) to W.R. Hay (Chief Secretary, NWFP), 27 April 1932, National Archives of India (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 40/5/1932.

[4] Sir William Barton, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., "The Problems of Law and Order Under a Responsible Government in the North-West Frontier Province", in the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 19, 1 (1932), pp. 5-21.

gateway to India, set the region apart. An example of this line of thinking may be found in the memoirs of Sir Olaf Caroe, a prominent Frontier officer. When describing the general uprising that swept the Frontier in the spring of 1930, he recalled that "European women and children were *sent down to India*."[5] This led the British to act with a level of impunity on the Frontier, believing that their actions took place outside the limelight.

Yet the attempt to cordon off the region was falling apart. Following discussions at the First Round Table Conference in December 1930, a committee drew up a reforms scheme for the NWFP and it became a full governor's province in 1932 with Indian ministers and a Legislative Council.[6] The province was also included in the All-Indian constitutional reforms hammered out in the 1935 Government of India Act. Beyond these concessions, the Frontier nationalist movement, though it had grown up independent of the All-Indian Congress Civil Disobedience campaign, was included in the truce negotiated between Gandhi and the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, in March 1931. Thereafter, Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the nationalist leader known as the "Frontier Gandhi" for his embrace of non-violence, officially federated his Red Shirt organization with the Congress party in the fall of 1931.

In this period, nationalists were increasingly aware of the British effort to cut the province off from the rest of India. The nationalist leader and president of the Peshawar Khilafat Committee, Allah Bukhsh Yusufi, catalogued the British attempt to turn the Frontier into a "forbidden land" in his 1930 polemic, *The Frontier Tragedy*, a publication quickly proscribed by the authorities.[7] Yusufi pointed out that in many ways the British treated the NWFP like the rest of India:

> A Chief Commissioner acts as agent to the Governor-General at Peshawar. The Indian Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Code are also common between the Frontier and the rest of India. When there is an appeal for war loans or recruits for the army, then too the Government is pleased to treat [the] Frontier as part and parcel of India. In all these maters the Frontier is done the honor of being an integral part of the Indian Empire.

[5] Unpublished Caroe Memoirs.

[6] See *Indian Round Table Conference: 12th November, 1930-19th January, 1931, Proceedings of Sub-Committees* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1931), pp. 179-220; and *Report of the North-West Frontier Subjects Committee, 1931* (Calcutta: Government of India Central Publication Branch, 1931), Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML).

[7] Viceroy (Irwin) to Secretary of State (Benn), 19 January 1931, Halifax Papers (IOR) C152/6.

On matters less advantageous to the Government of India, however, the authorities acted as if India and the Frontier were "two separate countries." This went beyond the decision to withhold constitutional reforms throughout the 1920s:

> Nowhere in India is a passport required if you want to travel from one province to another…The moment, however, you happen to cross the Attock bridge, you find, if you happen to be connected with the political movement that you are in a different land altogether, with different rules and different laws.[8]

The Chief Commissioner's decision to ban the entry of a Congress delegation coming to investigate the Frontier's draconian Frontier Crimes Regulation had served as the catalyst for Frontier revolt of spring 1930.[9] The Congress leader, Vallabhbhai Patel, had been banned from entering the province when he chaired the nationalist enquiry into the events of April 23rd, 1930.[10] The reason for this closing off of the region, Yusufi claimed, was to hide "all the dirty and heinous things" done on the Frontier.[11]

Despite the policy of cutting off the Frontier from "political India," Congress and other nationalist organizations managed to ascertain the nature of the British response to the local nationalism and use the details of British "excesses" on the Frontier as a major rhetorical weapon against imperial rule. This disregard for publicity, and bad publicity in particular, cost the British dearly. Treating the Frontier as if it were an entity separate from the rest of the Indian Empire led to the Frontier – and British policies on the Frontier – becoming a central issue in the ensuing debate over India's future. Rather than the Frontier being peripheral to the All-Indian political struggle, Britain's violent suppression of the local nationalist guaranteed that the Frontier now lay near its center.

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[8] Allah Bukhsh Yusufi, *The Frontier Tragedy: An Account of the Inhuman Acts of Repression and Terrorism, Blockades, Loot, Incendiarism & Massacres – Through Which the People of the North-West Frontier Province Have Had to Go During the Present Disturbance* (Peshawar: All India Khilafat Committee, 1930), pp. 10-11.

[9] See *Report of the Peshawar Disturbances Enquiry Committee*, 1930, Government of India, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA) WO 32/3526.

[10] See *Report [With Evidence] of the Peshawar Enquiry Committee, Appointed by the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress* (Allahabad: Allahabad Law Journal Press, 1930), NMML. The results of Patel's enquiry were also deemed illegal and suppressed by the Government of India (see Proscription under Press Ordinance of the Report of Congress into Peshawar Disturbances of April 1930, (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 30/3/1931).

[11] Yusufi, *The Frontier Tragedy*, p. 11.

THE DELHI PACT

The early 1930s was a period of turmoil throughout India, as Gandhi's Civil Disobedience movement, initiated in May 1930, swept the subcontinent. Throughout these years of upheaval the British Government of India responded with both the whip-hand and attempts at conciliation.[12] On the one side, Gandhi was invited to the Viceroy's House in Lutyens' Delhi to, as Churchill bitterly declared, "parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor."[13] Three "Round Table" conferences were held in London to forge a path forward on Indian constitutional reform, and the first steps were taken towards the 1935 Government of India Act, which would grant sweeping new powers to Indians at the provincial level.[14] These aspects of appeasement were counterbalanced, however, by the arrests of nationalist politicians such as Gandhi and Nehru, the brutal suppression of political parties, and numerous shootings and other acts of violence throughout British India.

Despite constitutional "concessions," state sanctioned violence lay at the core of the Government's campaign in the NWFP. The Frontier Revolt of 1930 had been sparked by the local administration's decision to use a disproportionate level of force against

[12] On Gandhi's Civil Disobedience campaign of 1930-1934 see Judith M. Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy, 2nd Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 264-293; Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience: The Mahatma in Indian Politics, 1928-34* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Judith M. Brown, "The Role of a National Leader: Gandhi, Congress and Civil Disobedience, 1929-34" in D.A. Low (ed.), *Congress and the Raj: Facets of the Indian Struggle, 1917-47*, 2nd Edition (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 133-164; D.A. Low, "'Civil Martial Law': The Government of India and the Civil Disobedience Movements, 1930-34" in Low, *Congress and the Raj*, pp. 165-198; D.A. Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism: The Imprint of Ambiguity, 1929-1942* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), chapters Two through Five; and Sarvepalli Gopal, *The Viceroyalty of Lord Irwin* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1957).

[13] Quoted in Carl Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire: The British Conservative Party and the 1935 Constitution* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Ltd., 1986), p. 63. On the "Delhi Pact" also see Sarvepalli Gopal, '"Drinking Tea with Treason": Halifax in India' in Wm. Roger Louis (ed.), *Adventures with Britannia: Personalities, Politics and Culture in Britain* (London: I.B. Tauris & Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, 1995), pp. 145-60.

[14] See *Indian Round Table Conference: 12th November, 1930-19th January, 1931, Proceedings* (Calcutta: Government of India Central Publication Branch, 1931). R.J. Moore's *The Crisis of Indian Unity, 1917-1940* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1974) remains the fullest and best study of the decisions and political machinations accompanying the London Round Table Conferences, which were held between November 1930 and January 1931, September and December 1931, and November and December 1932. The Indian National Congress was represented by its sole spokesman, Gandhi, only at the second conference.

several thousand unarmed protestors in Peshawar on April 23rd, 1930. This decision to respond with violence at the earliest opportunity typified British dealings with Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his allies for the next four years. In the months that followed the initial uprising in April 1930, the British proceeded to deal with the nationalist movement with, as Sir Evelyn Howell, the Indian Foreign Secretary who was then presiding over the Frontier, put it: "the *lathi*."[15] This policy, characterized by the arrest of countless nationalists, and firm often violent responses to any form of protest, held sway throughout the summer and fall of 1930. By November 1930 almost 30,000 Red Shirt volunteers languished in British prisons.[16]

In March 1931, however, Gandhi met with the outgoing Viceroy, Lord Irwin, and agreed to the Delhi Pact. One of Gandhi's stipulations was that the Frontier nationalists be included in the general amnesty guaranteed by the agreement, despite the fact that they were not officially part of the Congress organization. This precluded the Frontier administration from taking any further action against Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his allies and by the late spring much of the province was essentially outside of British control. Tax collection all but ceased and many items of law and order in the countryside were presided over by Red Shirt volunteers rather than the British administration.[17]

The fact that the Frontier was included in the terms of the Delhi Pact was proof that the nationalists, at the very least, viewed the NWFP as part of India. Resist it as the British might, the first step towards the Frontier's integration into the wider political struggle had taken place. As the British position in the region deteriorated in the fall of 1931, the administration champed at the bit to take action. Tensions between nationalists and the Government were increasing both in the province and in India as a whole. In the NWFP, numerous demonstrations took place in Peshawar city and Abdul Ghaffar Khan,

[15] E.B. Howell (Foreign Secretary, Government of India) to Viceroy, 5 May 1930, Halifax Papers (IOR) C152/24. A *lathi* is a quarterstaff that remains the principal weapon of the Indian Police.

[16] Brown, *Modern India*, p. 281.

[17] See Chapter Four.

who had been careful in his wording all through the spring and summer, was growing increasingly provocative in his speeches.[18]

The Government of India still encouraged the Frontier authorities to refrain from acting against the Red Shirts, but the All-India situation was helping to push matters to an impasse. The Delhi Pact was beginning to break down. The new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, a former governor of Bombay and Madras and Governor-General of Canada, had replaced the conciliatory Irwin in April of 1931. With a Conservative dominated government backing him at home, Willingdon took a far more aggressive stance towards Congress.[19] Willingdon also disliked Gandhi personally, and it is likely that the nationalist leader returned this enmity.[20] While the deeply religious Irwin was impressed by Gandhi's saintly demeanor, Willingdon, who had sparred with the Mahatma as a provincial Governor in the early 1920s, saw Gandhi as, in Churchill's phrasing, "a seditious middle temple lawyer" who could not be trusted.[21] Like many Conservatives, Willingdon had been uncomfortable with the Delhi Pact, believing that "in the minds of the people" Gandhi had seemed a plenipotentiary, and that there therefore appeared to be "two Kings" in India. Willingdon saw his charge as "reasserting the authority of the administration."[22]

Other issues were also lapping away at the foundations of the Delhi Pact. In the early summer of 1931, Gandhi informed the Government of India's Home Secretary, Sir Herbert Emerson, that he was unhappy about the Government's behavior in the NWFP, where he charged that a number of political prisoners, especially in the tribal agencies,

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[18] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation in the NWFP for the First Half of November 1931, (IOR) L P&J 12/32.

[19] See Philip Williamson, *National Crisis and National Government: British Politics, the Economy and Empire, 1926-1932* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 487-493.

[20] Halifax (Irwin) to Templewood (Sir Samuel Hoare), 13 July 1953, Templewood Papers (IOR) E240/76.

[21] Bridge, *Holding India*, p. 63.

[22] Viceroy to Secretary of State (Sir Samuel Hoare), 28 August 1931, Templewood Papers E240/5. Unlike other interwar Viceroys (Chelmsford, Reading, Irwin, and Linlithgow) who have large private paper collections residing in the Oriental and India Office Collections at the British Library, Willingdon's collection is decidedly slim. Unfortunately Lady Willingdon – by all accounts a charming if somewhat overbearing woman with a penchant for mauve – burned most of her late husband's personal papers following his death in 1941 (Discussion with Richard Bingle and David Blake (India Office Library), June 2007).

had yet to be released.[23] But by mid-summer, Gandhi's major concern was agricultural unrest in the United Provinces, where Sir Malcolm Hailey now presided as Governor.[24] The global collapse of agricultural prices hit the Gangetic plain hard and many cultivators were unable to pay their rents; tenant-landlord relations deteriorated and evictions ensued.[25] Rent strikes in the United Provinces combined with rent disputes in Bombay Presidency led Gandhi, after a fruitless negotiation with Willingdon, to declare that he would not, in the end, attend the second Round Table Conference in the fall – a key provision of the Delhi Pact. A second settlement was eventually agreed to in August, and Gandhi renewed his pledge to travel to London.[26]

Although the Pact was renewed, both sides, having gained breathing space, were now preparing for the end of the truce. In the fall Gandhi attended the Round Table Conference, which would fail and ultimately break up over Gandhi's refusal to agree to communal electorates. In October, Jawaharlal Nehru, the future Prime Minister of independent India, who had assumed his father Motilal's mantle as a major Congress

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[23] Letter from M.K. Gandhi to Herbert Emerson, 13 June 1931, (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part I). For more on Emerson's correspondence with Gandhi in this period see Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism*, Chapter Four.

[24] Gandhi to Hailey, 5 August 1931, in Ministry of Information and Broadcasting: Government of India, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 47 (Delhi: Government of India Publishing Division, 1958), p. 250.

[25] In his biography of Hailey, John Cell notes that "using 1873 as the base-100 year, the general index [of prices] had fallen from 203 (1929) to 171 (1930) and 127 (1931), while wheat had decreased from 262 (1929) to 172 (1930) and 134 (1931): a slump of about 50 percent over the two year period" (John W. Cell, *Hailey: A Study in British Imperialism, 1872-1969* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 182-183. Economic historians of India credit this dramatic drop in global commodities prices during the Great Depression as a major reason for the loosening of ties between Britain and India in the 1930s. In his path breaking work on India in this period, Dietmar Rothermund argues that in this era of economic nationalism, the focus of colonial rule was narrowed to the interest of the creditor in controlling the debtor. The access to colonies as suppliers of raw materials was no longer of importance as the depression had led to such a steep fall in the price of raw materials that anybody could buy them on the world market. Trade in commodities declined in terms of value but not of volume during this period and thus control of colonial commodities was, by and large, no longer lucrative (See Dietmar Rothermund, *India in the Great Depression, 1929-1939* (New Delhi, Manohar, 1992), p. 33. See also P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000*, 2nd Edition (London: Longman, 2002), pp. 554-559.

[26] This agreement was brokered, in large part, by Sir Herbert Emerson – the first high ranking British official to suggest the extension of Montagu-Chelmsford style reforms to the NWFP in the wake of the 1930 revolt – and was achieved by agreeing to an official enquiry into the rent collection in the Bardoli region of the Surat District of Bombay Presidency. The two other crises of this period – landlord-tenant relations in the United Provinces and the increasingly hostile rhetoric being employed by nationalists on the Frontier – went unaddressed (see Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism*, Chapter Four).

leader following the latter's death in February, cabled Gandhi for his agreement to commence a no-rent campaign in the United Provinces.[27] As the All-Indian Congress organization mobilized for the no-rent strike in the United Provinces, Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his followers on the Frontier were growing increasingly militant in their tone.[28]

In October Abdul Ghaffar officially merged his organization with the local Congress party to form the "Provincial Frontier Jirga." This move was supported by Nehru, who was taking an increasing interest in the Frontier after talking to Gandhi's son Devadas, who had recently returned from a fact-finding mission to the province.[29] Meanwhile Abdul Ghaffar continued to tour the NWFP telling crowds that their goal was to "oust" the British from India.[30] The British administration was growing increasingly restless as Red Shirt activity grew in Peshawar District in particular. With the harvest, large numbers of trans-border Afridi tribesmen would be in the district. The intelligence services worried that:

> Ignorant and unsophisticated tribesmen, to whom the "Delhi Pact," "Reforms," and the "Round Table Conference" are nothing but high sounding names, are apt to take things at their face value. To them the Red Shirts are the open enemies of Government and the only construction they can put on the fact that Red Shirts can carry on their noisy meetings and demonstrations unhindered is that Government is powerless to deal with them.

The administration believed that as in 1919 and 1897, this sign of weakness and, they argued, the resulting inability to maintain Britain's prestige, would lead the young tribal "hotheads" – who had only recently been brought to heel – to once again to take up arms and descend onto the plains.[31]

Willingdon took a low view of the Frontier nationalists, believing, like many other officials, that the Red Shirts were completely revolutionary and would have to

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[27] For the Congress organization the United Provinces in this period see Gyanendra Pandey, *The Ascendancy of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh, 1926-1934: A Study in Imperfect Mobilization* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978).

[28] Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity*, p. 243.

[29] See Report of Devadas Gandhi on the NWF Province, 1931, P. 16/32 All-India Congress Committee Papers, NMML.

[30] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation in the NWFP for the Second Half of October 1931, (IOR) L P&J 12/32.

[31] North-West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 41, for the Period Ending 21 October 1931, (IOR) L P&S 12/3141.

"squashed."[32] As Congress prepared for their rent strike in mid-October, Willingdon also girded his loins, requesting permission for a massive retaliation in event of a no-rent campaign or unrest on the Frontier.[33] After gaining approval, the Government drew up a number of repressive measures to be enacted the moment the Delhi Pact fell apart, including ordinances on Emergency Powers, Unlawful Instigation, Unlawful Association, and the Prevention of Molestation and Boycott.[34]

The Frontier administration was also gearing up for a "decisive blow" against the Red Shirts. Rumors, which were a plentiful currency on the Frontier, indicated that Abdul Ghaffar was going to recommence Civil Disobedience in the NWFP.[35] On October 28th, Olaf Caroe, now the sole Deputy Commissioner for Peshawar, summoned a number of nationalist leaders, including Abdul Ghaffar's brother, Dr. Khan Sahib, a former member of the Indian Medical Service, to Peshawar. Caroe was one of the most aggressive in supporting a violent suppression of the nationalist movement. It is likely that this stemmed from his distinctly paternalistic view of the Pathans, for whom he had a great knowledge and admiration.[36] A scholar who had attended Winchester and Magdalen College, Oxford, he was also a highly combative and, some said, emotional personality who often had trouble getting along with many Englishmen, let alone Indian nationalists.[37]

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[32] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 28 September 1931, Templewood Papers E240/5.

[33] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 13 October 1931, Templewood Papers E240/5.

[34] As Robin Moore states "the pièce de résistance was the Emergency Powers Ordinance, which sanctioned the arrest, detention, and control of suspects, the seizure of buildings and movables, the prohibition of access to places, the control of commodities in general use, of utilities, posts, telegraphs, etc., the search of persons and premises, and the introduction of special legal processes." The Emergency Powers Ordinance was given even greater reign in the NWFP were it worked in conjunction with the Frontier Crimes Regulation (Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity*, p. 245).

[35] North-West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 46, for the Period Ending 25 November 1931, L P&S 12/3141.

[36] See, for example, Caroe's magnum opus, *The Pathans, 550B.C.-A.D.1957* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1958).

[37] Caroe was quite honest about his combativeness in his unpublished memoirs held in the Oriental and India Office Collections at the British Library. Recollecting his fellow NWFP Governor and fellow Magdalen man, Sir George Cunningham, Caroe noted that "my Chief recollection of working with him at this earlier time is of an occasion when, as Chief Secretary, I took exception on a file to some orders passed down in writing by the Governor and his Minister, then Sir Abdul Qayyum. I can't now recall the substance of the matter, but I had got used to believing that in certain matters I knew better than my superiors – witness the case of the reoccupation of the city and the collection of revenue – and was no doubt too big for

The leader of the nationalists at this meeting, Khan Sahib, was a very different personality. Having gained a medical degree in England, he had married an Englishwoman and was known for his charm and good humor. Unlike Caroe, whom he would tangle with when he was Chief Minister of the province and Caroe was Governor, he was a natural politician.[38] At the meeting, Caroe, who had been pleading with the Government to crush the Red Shirts since May, insisted that the nationalists call off all processions, demonstrations, and meetings in Peshawar.[39] The meeting ended in deadlock, and on November 4th the administration declared all meetings and processions in the city illegal for a period of two months.[40]

At the end of November Nehru wrote to Khan Sahib about the prospects of renewing Civil Disobedience. With the second Round Table Conference on the verge of collapse, Nehru informed Khan Sahib that the Congress organization in the United

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my boots. On this occasion George telephoned me to come up to Government House, where on arrival I found him and AQ sitting solemnly in conclave and looking a little stern and embarrassed. The Governor then told me I must not go on record on paper to question a decision. AQ, whom I quite intimately since my time at Mardan, said I must have learned to be contumacious from the Yusafzai Khan Khwanin (meaning the body of Khans) and this wouldn't do at the Government level; then, just as I was preparing to argue, George produced one of those entrancing smiles, with almost a wink – and I had to finish with a "Please Sir, I'm sorry, I won't do it again." And that was that. But, all said, it is not a bad thing to have a subordinate who is ready to tell you quite plainly when he thinks you have made a mistake!" (Unpublished Caroe Memoirs). See also comments by Fraser Noble in Parshotam Mehra, *The North-West Frontier Drama, 1945-47: A Reassessment* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1998), p. 59; and Minute to Sir Saville Garner (Permanent Under-Secretary, Commonwealth Relations Office*)* from Algeron Rumbold (Commonwealth Relations Office), 19 July 1949, (IOR) L P&S 12/1417.

[38] Khan Sahib became the Congress Chief Minister of NWFP in 1937 and retained this post until he and all other Congress ministers were obliged to relinquish their posts by the Congress Working Committee following Britain's unilateral declaration of war on India's behalf in September 1939. During this period Khan Sahib maintained a close and friendly working relationship with Sir George Cunningham, the Governor of NWFP. When Khan Sahib returned to office in 1946 this bonhomie was not replicated with the new governor, Caroe. Caroe and Khan Sahib had a troubled working relationship. Parshotam Mehra provides an excellent account of Caroe's short yet eventful governorship in The *North-West Frontier Drama*. See also Peter John Brobst, *The Future of the Great Game: Sir Olaf Caroe, India's Independence, and the Defense of Asia* (Akron: University of Akron Press, 2005).

[39] Caroe, arguing that the provincial government was facing insolvency, stated: "If Abdul Ghaffar Khan is once more arrested, he should on no account be confined in a jail in any part of Northern India, but should be deported. He is reliably reported to have announced more than once that his confinement in Gujrat Jail with other agitators and in comfort, afforded him an unexampled opportunity of concerting measures for his future programme in a congenial atmosphere. This mistake should not be repeated" (Copy of Memorandum from the Deputy Commissioner, Peshawar to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, NWFP, 5 May 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part I)).

[40] North-West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 43, for the Period Ending 4 November 1931, L P&S 12/3141.

Provinces was preparing for a no-rent campaign and that they may all soon be in jail.[41] Events were moving rapidly in the NWFP as well, with the Red Shirts ignoring the new restrictions on processions and demonstrations. The Chief Commissioner of the province, Sir Ralph Griffith, journeyed to Delhi at on November 22nd to apprise his colleagues of the situation on the Frontier. At a meeting held in Evelyn Howell's office, he informed those assembled that:

> A new danger also was that Abdul Ghaffar Khan had definitely broached the question of non-payment of land revenue and water rates. He was also sponsoring a movement for the refusal to take canal water for the coming rabi crop. Crime had reached dangerous proportions and collection of land revenue had become exceedingly difficult.[42]

Moreover, Griffith emphasized that this all threatened to spill over into the tribal areas, including the Sam Ranizai area of the Malakand agency – the epicenter of the 1897-98 revolt.[43] Though alarmed, the assembled officials and officers agreed that, if action was taken in the near future, it was highly desirable that this should happen in the United Provinces rather than in the NWFP.

This policy arose from the concerted efforts by the administration to push a wedge between Hindu and Muslims within the nationalist movement. The Round Table conference, for instance, was breaking down over the question of minority electorates and the British were keen to show themselves as conciliatory towards Islam.[44] The NWFP was Muslim majority, and the benefit of the Delhi Pact falling apart in the United Provinces was, Emerson pointed out, that the opposition there was "mainly Hindu." The "tactical advantage to [the] Government would be very great."[45] They therefore decided

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[41] North-West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 47, for the Period Ending 2 December 1931, L P&S 12/3141.

[42] Notes on Conference on the General Situation in NWFP, 24 November 1931, (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part I and II).

[43] Memorandum from Political Agent, Malakand (W.R. Hay) to the Chief Commissioner, NWFP, 13 November 1931, (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part III).

[44] See David Page, *Prelude to Partition: The Indian Muslims and the Imperial System of Control, 1920-1932* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 252-258.

[45] Notes on Conference on the General Situation in NWFP. Throughout this period the intelligence bureau on the Frontier was hoping against hope that the local nationalist movement would split over the fact that Abdul Ghaffar Khan had allied himself with the "Hindu" Congress party, something which old Frontier hands believed the Pathans would never stand for. The Frontier intelligence reports are littered with dead end reports of supposed nationalist schisms over religion. The appearance of a "religious tinge" for instance, in several of Abdul Ghaffar's speeches in early November prompted the conclusion that

that Griffith should proceed with the "steady administration of the ordinary law," arresting and trying local leaders eligible for prosecution under the new restrictions.

While Griffith was in Delhi he also consulted with the Government of India over the extension of reforms to the Frontier. The British reasoned that any "firm" action taken against the nationalists in the NWFP would have to be accompanied by an announcement stating the date for the inauguration of full reforms. Final decisions about the nature of the reforms were hammered out in Delhi and planning began for the announcement.[46] Returning to Peshawar, Griffith found that the nationalist activity had grown. The administration extended the two month prohibition on all meetings, demonstrations and processions to the whole of Peshawar District, and declared that all Europeans wishing to drive through the Charsadda Subdivision, home to Abdul Ghaffar, must be accompanied by an escort of two armed persons. Furthermore, Peshawar City was placed out of bounds for all European officers, their families, and nursing sisters not on duty there.[47] Abdul Ghaffar now publicly called on the people to prepare for a resumption of Civil Disobedience.[48] Meanwhile the British Prime Minister's recent announcement that the NWFP "should be constituted a Governor's province" was denounced as useless reforms by the Peshawar Congress Committee, which stated that "not a single well wisher of the soil would ever be content with anything less than complete independence."[49]

"feeling in the province is gradually, and perhaps unconsciously, drifting towards a Khilafat movement and consequently away from the Hindu controlled Congress" (North-West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 43, for the Period Ending 4 November 1931). There were of course divisions within the ranks of Frontier nationalism, much of it spawned by anger over Abdul Ghaffar's merger with Congress. He was quick to nip these in the bud, however. It was only in the 1940s that these divisions became real and the Frontier nationalist movement became divided over the question of religion and the Congress (see Stephen Alan Rittenberg, *Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Pakhtuns: The Independence Movement in India's North-West Frontier Province* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1988), pp. 109-115).

[46] Proceedings of a Conference held at Delhi, on 23rd November 1931, to Discuss Questions Relating to the Future Administration of the North-West Frontier Province, (NAI) REFORMS OFFICE F. 43/32-R/1932.

[47] "Charsadda Declared Disaffected: Europeans Not to Enter Without Armed Escort," *Civil and Military Gazette*, 3 December 1931, NMML.

[48] North-West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 48, for the Period Ending 9 December 1931, L P&S 12/3141.

[49] See statement by Prime Minister Ramsay McDonald, 1 December 1931, in *Proceedings of the Indian Round Table Conference, IInd Session* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1932), p. 416; and Resolution of City Congress Committee, Peshawar, 4 December 1931, All-India Congress Committee Papers, P-17/1931, NMML.

On December 10th, Griffith informed the Viceroy and Howell that large gatherings were being held throughout the province and that Red Shirt leaders were making "dangerously inflammatory" speeches and inciting people to "active violence." The Chief Commissioner warned his superiors that he might at any moment request permission to strike at the Red Shirt organization "as a whole" throughout the NWFP. The current cold weather favored the administration, since it would be more difficult to operate with British troops once the high springtime temperatures began. Moreover, Griffith believed that it was essential that the province be pacified in advance of the political reforms that he was planning to enact.[50] The Viceroy shared these concerns. After he received Griffith's cable, he informed the Secretary of State, Sir Samuel Hoare, that there was "no doubt that Ghaffar and Jawaharlal [Nehru] are running in couples and the only thing to do I hope you will agree is to get hold of them as soon as possible." He added that one of his great regrets was that the Government of India lacked the power to deport prisoners, for he would like to send Abdul Ghaffar to the West Indies.[51]

For his part, Howell informed Griffith that it was only a matter of time until the truce with Congress collapsed. While the Government would prefer that nothing be done in the NWFP until the no-rent campaign commenced in the United Provinces, they recognized that the NWFP situation was "exceedingly dangerous." If he requested extraordinary powers to deal with the Red Shirts, the Government would, Howell assured Griffith, feel compelled to grant them.[52] A few days later Howell told Griffith that the Provincial Congress Committee in the United Provinces had given permission for the no-rent campaigns in five districts.[53] Gandhi was en route from England and the Working Committee of the Congress would likely endorse this campaign upon the Mahatma's arrival on December 28th.

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[50] Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Foreign Department, Government of India, 10 December 1931, (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part III).

[51] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 13 December 1931, (IOR) L PO 5/23.

[52] Letter from E.B. Howell to the Viceroy, 12 December 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part I and II).

[53] Howell to Sir R.E.H. Griffith (Chief Commissioner, NWFP), 14 December 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part I and II).

On December 15th, the Frontier administration decided to move against Abdul Ghaffar. They cabled Delhi with their intentions, which included the arrest and deportation of all the major Red Shirt leaders and the enactment of the "Emergency Powers and Unlawful Association Ordinance" which would give the administration sweeping extralegal powers to crush Frontier nationalism.[54] As a public relations cover, the Chief Commissioner would invite Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his brother, Khan Sahib, to Peshawar on December 22nd and call on them to join in the "constructive work" of political reforms in the province – something the administration knew the nationalist leaders would never do.[55] The Viceroy and Secretary of State still hoped that the administration would "hold its hand" until after the All-India Congress meeting scheduled in Bombay on December 29th, where it was likely to call off the truce with the Government, but gave its approval all the same.[56]

Having received the Chief Commissioner's invitation to the durbar announcing the new reforms, the Frontier Congress resolved that neither Abdul Ghaffar nor Khan Sahib should attend.[57] On December 22nd, the nationalists lined the roads between Charsadda and Peshawar and demonstrated against the durbar as the Chief Commissioner disingenuously declared that "we must sink our differences."[58]Armed with the Red Shirt leaders' refusal to attend the durbar, and believing the situation "critical," Griffith went forward with his plans.[59] On Christmas Eve, in part because it was the most "unexpected" date and "therefore the most suitable for surprise," but also to forestall Abdul Ghaffar

[54] Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Foreign Department, Government of India, 15 December 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part III).

[55] Telegram from Foreign Department, Government of India to Chief Commissioner, NWFP, 21 December 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part III).

[56] Telegram from Viceroy to Secretary of State, 18 December 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part III); and Telegram from Secretary of State to Viceroy, 19 December 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part III).

[57] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation in the NWFP for the Second Half of December 1931, (IOR) L P&J 12/32.

[58] North-West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 50, for the Period Ending 23rd December 1931, L P&S 12/3141; and "NWFP Commissioner Appeals for Support," *Civil and Military Gazette*, 24 December 1931, NMML.

[59] Telegram from Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Foreign Department, Government of India, 22 December 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part III).

leaving the province to meet Gandhi on his return to Bombay, police and troops moved against the nationalists.[60]

THE FRONTIER CAMPAIGN

By dawn's light, Abdul Ghaffar, Khan Sahib, and several other leaders had been arrested and placed on a special train bound for a prison in Bihar. In the following hours the City Disturbance Column occupied Peshawar, and five separate columns spread out throughout the district. In Peshawar city alone, over 2,000 people were arrested.[61] By the end of Christmas day, troops, accompanied by the RAF, which focused on reconnaissance, had spread out through the province. These columns were charged with breaking up nationalist meetings and, more ominously, "rounding up the worst villages." This involved a night march to surround a village, a pre-dawn raid, mass arrests, and seizure of firearms and any nationalist literature.[62] These raids were possible under the sweeping powers Willingdon bestowed on Griffith on December 24th. The Emergency Powers, Unlawful Association, and Unlawful Instigation Ordinances permitted the administration to bar persons from a specific area (i.e. the entire province) if the Government believed that any person "has acted, is acting, or is about to act in a manner prejudicial to public safety." The penalty for disobeying this order was two years' imprisonment. The Ordinances empowered officers to take possession of buildings and prohibit or limit access to certain places. The punishment for dissuasion from enlistment in the army as well as for the dissemination of "false rumors" was one year's imprisonment.[63]

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[60] North-West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 1, for the Period Ending 7th January 1932, L P&S 12/3141.

[61] Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation in the NWFP for the Second Half of December 1931. See also Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *My Life and Struggle: Autobiography of Badshah Khan as Narrated to K. B. Narang* (Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, 1969), pp. 146-148. The arrests were made under Regulation III of 1818, which allowed the Government to deport the accused to prisons in India without trial (Rittenberg, *Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Pakhtuns*, p. 118).

[62] North-West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 1, for the Period Ending 7th January 1932.

[63] "Special Powers for Frontier Authorities," *Civil and Military Gazette*, 26 December 1931, NMML.

These actions were accompanied by a propaganda campaign within the province. Leaflets were dropped from the air throughout Peshawar District, and Griffith issued a statement justifying the administrations' actions.[64] The Chief Commissioner claimed that British efforts to extend full reforms to the NWFP had been consistently thwarted by the Red Shirts, who refused to see the Delhi Pact as a means towards a permanent solution to "constitutional problems." Although the Government had sought to secure "peaceful conditions" through constitutional reforms, these hopes "were not realized." Abdul Ghaffar Khan's speeches, Griffith stated, had grown increasingly "inflammatory, seditious, and racial" in tone. He noted the following excerpt from a speech delivered by Abdul Ghaffar on December 12th:

> We have two purposes; firstly to free our country and secondly to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. Do not rest until freedom is won. It does not matter if you are blown up with guns, bombs, etc. If you are brave come out and into the battle field and fight the English who are the cause of all our troubles.

This, Griffith claimed, was an incitement to violent revolution. The Chief Commissioner argued that this menace, when combined with calls for non-payment of rents and Congress activities in the tribal areas, had forced the Government to act.[65] This communiqué, and a larger annotated list of the Red Shirts' subversive activity released at the end of the year, were drawn up for publicity puroposes; but they also represented the genuine beliefs of many within the administration.[66] Writing to Hoare on Boxing Day, Willingdon confided that "the Delhi Pact at all events is dead and gone, murdered by Jawaharlal Nehru and Abdul Ghaffar."[67]

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[64] North-West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 1, for the Period Ending 7th January 1932.

[65] Statement Issued by the Chief Commissioner, North-West Frontier Province on the 24th December 1931, (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 123/32.

[66] Statement by the Chief Commissioner, North-West Frontier Province, 30th December 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 123/32.

[67] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 26 December 1931, Templewood Papers E240/5. That the "Red Shirts" were thoroughly revolutionary was widely held by the British throughout India. A fascinating publication from the era is Sir John Cumming's edited volume *Political India, 1832-1932: A Cooperative Survey of a Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932). The contributors to this book on Indian nationalism were all either current or retired ICS mandarins, and it is interesting to see their attempt at an "objective" approach to their erstwhile opponents. J. Campbell Kerr's (ICS, retired) chapter on "subversive movements" in India describes the Red Shirts as follows: "The Organization known as the Red Shirts in the NWFP is unique in of its kind. In all the revolutionary schemes which have been described, the

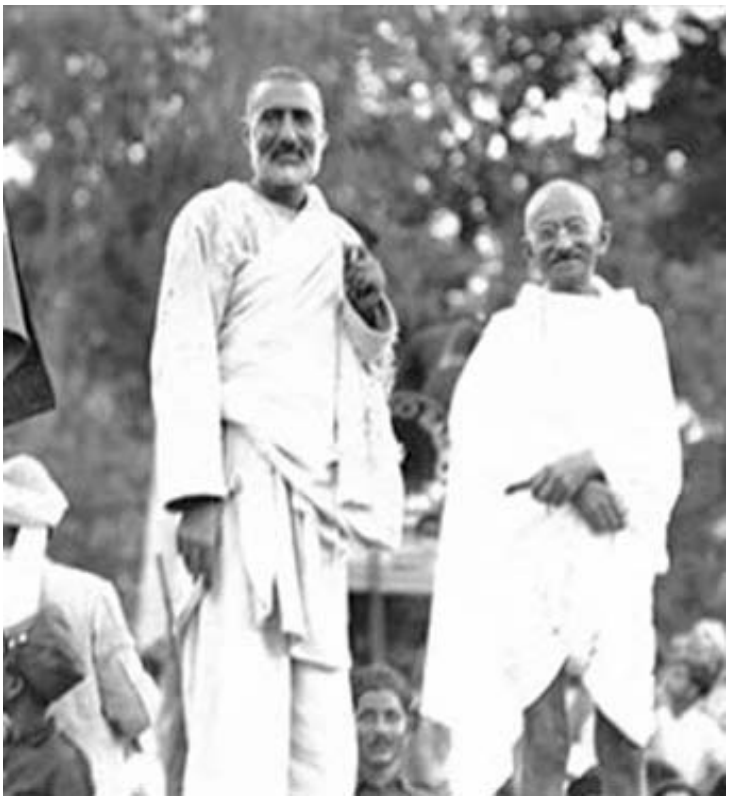

Illustration 7: Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Mahatma Gandhi, 1937[68]

Although the occupation of Peshawar city had been relatively uneventful, operations in other parts of the province led to a number of violent incidents. In the first couple days the worst outburst was in Kohat. Over 700 Red Shirt volunteers, protesting the arrests of their leaders, were encountered by the Deputy Commissioner, L.W.H.D Best, several police officers, and a cavalry squadron. When the crowd refused to disperse, the squadron advanced on them and, as on April 23rd, 1930, the crowd resorted to brick throwing. As in that earlier situation a high ranking officer (the Police Superintendent)

Muhammadans, as a community, have taken no part except temporarily during the Turkish peace negotiations…The Red Shirt movement…although consisting of Muhammadans, became a definitely revolutionary body" (Kerr, *Political India*, p. 244). Also see H.R.S., "Unrest in the Peshawar District, 1930-32", in the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 19, 4 (1932), pp. 624-642.

[68] Reproduced from Pyarelal Nair, *A Pilgrimage for Peace: Gandhi and Frontier Gandhi Among the N.W.F. Pathans* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1950).

was hit in the face with a brick and panicked, ordering the troops to open fire. Over 60 rounds were fired and, the British estimated, at least 13 were killed.[69]

News of the shooting reverberated through "political India." After the experiences of the last several months, the Frontier was very much on the minds of nationalist leaders. On December 28th, the evening of his return to India, Gandhi gave a speech about the Frontier. He attacked the carrot and stick approach that the Frontier administration was using:

> Side by side with the declaration that the Frontier Province is about to placed on the same footing as the other provinces, you find in that Province today an ordinance for which I cannot find a parallel whatsoever. I have not myself studied it carefully. I have gone through the brief press reports that are available. But I cannot tell myself that this is a human piece of legislation. The ordinance gives no protection for the life or property.

Gandhi rhetorically asked, what was the Red Shirt leadership's crime was. Because they failed to attend the Durbar? On top of this seeming withdrawal of the rule of law, he brought up the reports of the recent shooting in Kohat. Gandhi affirmed that civil disobedience should be punished because that is the essence of civil disobedience. But he had not witnessed nor heard anywhere that the penalty for defying law, apart from violence done by the courts, was to be met "with bullets." With the recent reports of at least 14 killed at Kohat, the Mahatma wondered how many more would be shot down on the Frontier.[70] Beginning with this speech and going on into 1932 and 1933, the Congress would seek to ascertain the nature of the Government actions on the Frontier and publicize their findings as much as possible.

With All-India Civil Disobedience now on the brink of resuming, Willingdon promulgated the Emergency Powers Ordinance for all of India at 12 noon on January 4th, 1932 – the first time the British had ever done this.[71] Gandhi and most of the other Congress leaders were arrested by the end of the day. By the end of the month over

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[69] See Viceroy to Secretary of State, 27 December 1931; and Memorandum by L.W.H.D. Best (Deputy Commissioner, Kohat), 28 December 1931, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part III). Best was Sir Norman Bolton's son-in-law. He was killed fighting the Mohmands in 1935 (Aubrey Metcalfe (Foreign Secretary, Government of India) to J.C. Walton (Foreign and Political Secretary, India Office), 13 May 1935, Walton Papers (IOR) D545/9).

[70] Speech at the Welfare of India League by M. K. Gandhi, at the Hotel Majestic, Bombay, 28 December 1931, Templewood Papers E240/75.

[71] Low, *Congress and the Raj*, p. 174.

14,000 had been arrested in connection with Civil Disobedience throughout India – nearly half (6,000) of these were in the NWFP alone.[72] By mid-month the administration's internal reports could unequivocally state that "all things considered the situation in the province generally is very satisfactory."[73] Although this period can be described as, in the words of one author, "the resurgence of reaction," throughout India, the number of arrests in the NWFP and the speed at which the authorities could claim "a steady improvement in the political situation" speaks to a stronger form of reaction than that found elsewhere in the subcontinent.[74]

This fact led nationalists of all stripes to attempt to bring attention to the abuses that they believed were going on in the NWFP. Some, such as the Muslim Conference in Delhi, declared a "Frontier Day" in protest against Government excesses on the Frontier.[75] The Congress in Bombay followed suit and organized their own "Frontier Day" procession in Bombay City at the end of the month. The police met the demonstration with revolvers and *lathis*, and over 160 people were injured.[76] These protests and the amount of Congress propaganda that featured stories about the Frontier alarmed the Viceroy, who asked Howell to ask Griffith whether he could categorically deny that certain excesses were taking place. The Chief Commissioner informed Howell that "I would point out that while some incidents of an undesirable nature referred to in your telegram have undoubtedly occurred, I and my officers are fully alive to the necessity of their discontinuance and special measures."[77] This was not terribly reassuring. Howell noted, however, that it had to be remembered "in extenuation of the

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[72] See Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity*, p. 250, for All-Indian figures. For NWFP figures see Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation in the NWFP for the Second Half of December 1931 and Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation in the NWFP for the Second Half of January 1932, (IOR) L P&J 12/43.

[73] North-West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 2, for the Period Ending 14th January 1932, L P&S 12/3141.

[74] Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity*, p. 250; and Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation in the NWFP for the Second Half of January 1932.

[75] See Resolution by the Working Committee of the Muslim Conference held at Delhi on 31st January 1932 Condemning the Action of Government in NWFP, (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 14/9/1932; and Low, *Congress and the Raj*, p. 175.

[76] "Police Fire on Bombay Mob," *Civil and Military Gazette*, 31 January 1932, NMML.

[77] Telegram from Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Foreign Department, Government of India, 31 January 1932 HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part III).

conduct of the police, that they have had to endure 18 months' very severe provocation." Howell reported that the Frontier administration trusted that any calls for an enquiry into "excesses" on the Frontier would be vigorously opposed.[78] In short, the answer to Willingdon's request for a categorical denial was "no."

Demonstrations were one way to bring attention to what nationalists suspected was going on in the NWFP, but the best way was to travel to province itself, a near impossibility given the fact that the NWFP was sealed off from the rest of Indian by virtue of the Emergency Powers Ordinances. Several nationalists and nationalist sympathizers were able to break this cordon, however. One was the English missionary turned Indian nationalist, Verrier Elwin.[79] On the eve of his arrest Gandhi had sent for Elwin and requested that, as an Englishman, he travel to the Frontier, to see "what was really happening there." Elwin did so, exchanging his *dhoti* for European dress and travelling to the province under his own name. He checked into Deane's Hotel in the Peshawar Cantonment and then set out to collect information.[80]

Elwin reported that when he arrived in Peshawar on January 11th, "there was not a Red Shirt to be seen in the whole district, and the movement had practically been driven underground." After speaking to both Indians and Europeans throughout the province he reported on the nature of the column marches into the villages. Elwin stated that the column usually arrived at about three in the morning and surrounded a particular village. The leading men were ordered to produce any Red Shirt volunteers. If they refused, they were severely beaten. If any Red Shirts were found they were arrested, beaten, their uniforms removed and burnt. If, as was common, their land revenue was outstanding the

[78] Note by Sir Evelyn Howell, 31 January 1932, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part III). Howell received his Knighthood (KCSI) in the New Years Honours List, 1932 (Walton to Howell, 1 January 1932, Walton Papers D545/6).

[79] Elwin is a fascinating character. The son of the Anglican Bishop of Sierra Leone, he began his career as Oxford, where he was appointed Vice-Principal of Wycliffe Hall in 1926 and lecturer at Merton College the following year. He then set out for India as a missionary. He soon became a follower of Gandhi and simultaneously became a self-taught anthropologist, studying India's tribal populations. At independence Nehru asked him to stay on and advise the Government of India on Tribal policies – especially in the North-East. See Verrier Elwin, *The Tribal World of Verrier Elwin: An Autobiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964) and Ramachandra Guha's excellent *Savaging the Civilized: Verrier Elwin, His Tribals, and India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

[80] What Is Happening in the North-West Frontier Province? By Father Verrier Elwin, P. 16/32 All-India Congress Committee Papers, NMML.

police raided the houses, including the *zenana*, roughed up the women and took their jewelry."[81]

The worst treatment was of course reserved for active Red Shirt volunteers. Batches of volunteers, stripped of turban, shirt and shoes, clad only in pyjamas, were marched through Peshawar by the military. In a disturbing echo of Dyer's infamous 1919 "crawling order," the inhabitants of Utmanzai (Abdul Ghaffar's home village) were ordered to salute any European who passed by: if they failed to do so, they were beaten. Elwin wrote that:

> On January 13th there was a meeting of Red Shirts and citizens in…Peshawar City. Many women watched the scene from the balconies of houses that overlooked the market. The police and the military arrived and ordered the meeting to disperse. The people refused and there was a heavy lathi charge. This was followed by some stone throwing from the balconies and a police officer had his cheek cut open. Then the military went into the houses, climbed upstairs and not only beat the women but actually threw two of them down from the balcony to the ground. One of these had her leg broken and other's arm was broken in three places.

Elwin believed that the problem was not the regular police. These, he argued were "far more enlightened than those of any other branch of the administration." The problem was with the "additional police" and the military. These "additional police" were usually military reservists, "undisciplined, untrained, accustomed to loot and plunder." Elwin claimed that the bulk of the "excesses" were due to them, with the rest residing with the military who urged the police on to more violent measures and used the "butt-ends of their rifles with deadly effect." Although he did not want to "blackguard" fellow Englishmen, the ordinary Briton on the Frontier was "callous and without imagination…the old India at its worst." There may have been "peace" in the NWFP, but it was the peace of the desert.[82]

Elwin's trip to the Frontier lasted five days. On the fifth day he traveled up to see the Khyber Pass, but before going he dispatched a letter to Olaf Caroe, informing him of his presence and requesting an interview. Upon his return that evening, Elwin was met by Caroe who placed him under arrest and ordered him and his belongings searched. As the officers approached his hotel room, Elwin stuffed his notes into a box of "Force" cereal,

[81] What Is Happening in the North-West Frontier Province?
[82] What Is Happening in the North-West Frontier Province?

where they escaped detection. Satisfied that Elwin possessed no incriminating documentation, Caroe banned him from the province and put him in a sealed compartment on the next train out of Peshawar.[83] Upon returning "down country" Elwin held a press conference and published his report in a pamphlet entitled *What is Happening in the North-West Frontier Province?*[84] It was immediately banned by the Government of India and all known copies were seized and destroyed.[85]

Whereas Elwin's report was meant for public consumption, other Congress reports about the Frontier were meant to be read by those members of the Congress leadership not currently residing in a British jail. Among this class were the reports brought to the Working Committee by Jivatram Kripalani, General Secretary of the Congress in 1928-29, who had managed to visit the Frontier undetected in February 1932. Kripalani painted a horrific picture of the Government's actions in the NWFP. He reported that the key Congress tactic of picketing liquor shops and brothels had been discontinued due to the "shameless methods" of Government officials in humiliating the Pathan. The picketers were stripped naked, their faces blackened by coal tar, and sticks inserted in their "private parts." Kripalani stated that "the Pathan was prepared for the prison, the lathi and the bullet; but his imagination did not count upon the various methods of humiliation employed by the Government." As far as the military's village raids were concerned, he stated that these were becoming less common, but remained instruments of terror:

> In the case of a raid on one village the majority of the male members were absent, the women were severely beaten and their upper garments torn off their bodies. The person giving this report would not say any more. It was obvious that he did not wish to mention the worst that happened to these women left entirely at the mercy of the tommies.[86]

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[83] See Elwin, *The Tribal World of Verrier Elwin*, p. 164-66. Thereafter the Government considered banning Elwin altogether from India (Proposal for the Cancelation of the Endorsement for India on the Passport of Father Elwin as to Prevent his Return to India, (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 25/36/1932).

[84] See "Impressions of Frontier Tour: Father Elwin's Statement to the Press," *Hindustan Times*, 27 January 1932, HOME (POL.) F. 123/32.

[85] Proscription of Father Verrier Elwin's book entitled "What is Happening in the NWFP?", (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 29/9/1932.

[86] Report from North-West Frontier Province by Jivatram Bhagwandas Kripalani, 13 February 1932, P. 16/32 All-India Congress Committee Papers, NMML. The decrease in column marches is corroborated by the Government of India's internal records, which state that by the end of January two columns had been removed from Peshawar District (Fortnightly Report on the Internal Situation in the NWFP for the Second Half of January 1932).

Kripalani also contended that the Government's reports on the fatalities sustained at Kohat in December were wildly understated. Elwin's estimation of near 50 deaths was also too low. Kripalani pegged the number instead at 200.[87]

By the end of February the British had smashed resistance in every district but Peshawar and even there the "progress that [had] been made in the two months since Christmas day [had] exceeded the most sanguine expectations."[88] Believing the situation under control, the British scheduled Legislative Assembly elections for the first of April – Griffith was to stay on as the NWFP's first Governor.[89] This, however, led to another upswing in nationalist activity in Peshawar by mid-March.[90] There were mass protests, some including upwards of 30,000 demonstrators.[91] With the elections drawing near and the Viceroy scheduled to visit the province and inaugurate the reforms on April 18th, the administration once again resorted to a heavy hand.

Kripalani made further reports to Congress in March and April. In April he confirmed that outrages on the women had occurred during the village raids and that Red Shirt volunteers had been sodomized with sticks by the "additional police" were true. In some cases the victims were taken to house tops and exposed to public gaze. In still other cases their "women folk" were forced to witness these demonstrations.[92] Charges of this nature are notable, as the British on the Frontier had a longstanding fascination with the incidence of homosexuality among Pathan men, which they believed to be a chief social ill of the province.[93]

In April, as the British attempted to hold elections on the Frontier, the Congress began a concerted propaganda campaign using the reports that were coming back from

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[87] Report from North-West Frontier Province by Jivatram Bhagwandas Kripalani.

[88] North-West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 8, for the Period Ending 25th February 1932, L P&S 12/3141.

[89] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 29 February 1932, Templewood Papers E240/5.

[90] North-West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 11, for the Period Ending 16th March 1932, L P&S 12/3141.

[91] India Office to General Sir Clive Wigram (ADC to the King), 14 April 1932, L PO 5/23.

[92] Note by Jivatram Bhagwandas Kripalani, April 1932, P. 16/32 All-India Congress Committee Papers, NMML.

[93] Confidential Letter from The Chief Commissioner, NWFP to the Foreign Secretary, Government of India, 13 February 1931, (NAI) HOME (POL.) F 45/V/31.

the NWFP.[94] Congress Bulletins trumpeted the continuation of Civil Disobedience on the Frontier despite the Government's repeated humiliations of Pathans. The Congress charged that in one instance, two Red Shirts were beaten till they fell unconscious. "No sooner did they gain consciousness than they were asked to apologize. On their refusal, a bed of thorns was made out of two babul trees and the two men were rolled over that bed several times." Villages were still being surrounded, their men beaten and their women threatened with rape unless they paid a fine of Rs. 1800/- for the villagers' adherence to the nationalist cause.[95] Subsequent bulletins added to these charges. In the wake of the NWFP elections, which featured a very low turnout after Congress decided to boycott them – thus revealing the depth of nationalist support on the Frontier – the Congress claimed that the world was witnessing the "end of an Empire."[96] "Having raped and outraged the honour of Pathan women, having massacred hundreds and perhaps thousands of brave Red Shirts sworn to non-violence, having made thousands of Frontier Mussalmans homeless and destitute," the British, Congress claimed, were being defeated by non-violence.[97]

Despite the obvious hyperbole of these statements, the Government of India, unlike the Frontier administration, was sensitive to these charges. Willingdon and officials in the Home Department were especially concerned how charges of this nature would play among India's Muslims, whom the Government was attempting to separate from Congress. When the Frontier campaign began, New Delhi instructed all local administrations to emphasize that the Red Shirts were affiliated with Congress and therefore worked for "Hindu interests."[98] In this vein, the British had allowed the old Khilafat leader Shaukat Ali, who had broken with Gandhi, to visit the Frontier in

[94] See Bulletins issued by the Congress Alleging Excesses in the NWFP and Other Provinces, (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 5/60/1932.

[95] Extract from the Bombay Congress Bulletin of the 8th of April1932, (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 40/5/1932.

[96] See Amit Kumar Gupta, *North-West Frontier Province Legislature and Freedom Struggle, 1932-47* (New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research, 1976), pp. 27-32.

[97] Extract from Bombay Congress Bulletin dated the 15th April 1932, HOME (POL.) F. 40/5/1932.

[98] Home Department, Government of India to All Local Governments, 16 January 1932, HOME (POL.) F. 123/1932.

February.[99] Moderate Muslim papers like Karachi's *Al-Wahid* were already publishing stories about the Government's "brutal" suppression of the Red Shirts.[100] This concern led the Government to ask the Frontier administration whether the nationalist claims about abuse held water. The resulting correspondence sheds further light on the nature of the British response to the Red Shirts.

In light of Congress bulletins charging a number of outrages on the Frontier, the Indian Home Secretary, Sir Herbert Emerson, informed the NWFP administration that, even if they thought it unnecessary, the Government wanted the "actual facts" on record. This would be useful for the India Office, the Government's Bureau of Public Information, and the overseas press, especially the United States.[101] The initial response from the Inspector General of Police on the Frontier began with the assertion that everything the Congress said was a lie. He stated that no picketers were stripped naked, nor were any beaten unconscious. But then he relented on some of the Congresses' claims. While no village had been fined Rs. 1800/-, one had been fined Rs. 2000/- and, more importantly, he had "heard" that one Red Shirt had been beaten in Caroe's presence, and that Red Shirts had been thrown into beds of thorns. He had received no official reports of these activities, however. Nor, apparently, had he asked Caroe if the claims were true.[102]

A further communication from the Chief Secretary of the NWFP admitted that "irregular practices" had taken place. They were not exactly as the Congress bulletins had described them, however. It was true, for instance, that "on certain occasions," Red Shirts had been stripped and "made to sit on thorns," but these victims were "not rolled on them."[103] Thus, despite these caveats, the Frontier administration fully admitted to these "excesses." Although these had been stopped, the Chief Secretary insisted, as Griffith had

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[99] North-West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 9, for the Period Ending 2nd March 1932, L P&S 12/3141.

[100] "Painful Situation on the Frontier," *Al-Wahid*, 30 January 1932, HOME (POL.) F. 123/1932.

[101] Letter from H.W. Emerson to W.R. Hay (Chief Secretary, NWFP), 27 April 1932, HOME (POL.) F. 40/5/1932.

[102] Copy of UO No. 272-C from the Inspector General of Police, North West Frontier Province, 8 June 1932, HOME (POL.) F. 40/5/1932.

[103] Underlining in original document.

in January, "that such excesses were chiefly due to the extreme provocation under which all officers have been laboring for many months."[104] Moreover the impression among the police had been that they were operating under martial law and they had acted accordingly. Nothing should be done, the administration argued, to undermine the police and military's morale.[105]

Furthermore, not only had the Frontier government been engaged in "excesses," but they felt no need to counter the nationalists' charges. Griffith thought it was best to ignore the Congress bulletins, leaving it to the local governments, in whose area the bulletins were issued, to "track down and deal with the offenders."[106] The Frontier administration clearly still saw itself as a separate entity from the rest of India. The Home Department noted that the normal procedure was for local administrations to contradict charges in communiqués, and that it was desirable that the NWFP Government should be in accordance with the general procedure.[107] Surveying the nature of the allegations and Peshawar's predisposition to ignore any criticisms emanating from "down country," one Home Department official, C.M. Trivedi, noted that "It would appear as if the NWFP Govt. underrated the importance of publicity." It was, he believed, unnecessary to contradict general allegations or falsehoods, but when specific allegations were made something needed to be done. This was especially important as stories of Government outrages in the "NWFP often obtain a wide currency in the Indian press."[108] Yet, despite these remonstrations, the Frontier administration continued to refuse to publish targeted responses to the nationalist charges.

[104] For Griffith's earlier conversation with Howell see Note by Sir Evelyn Howell, 31 January 1932, HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part III).

[105] Letter from C.H. Gidney (Chief Secretary, NWFP) to H.W. Emerson, 25 June 1932, HOME (POL.) F. 40/5/1932.

[106] Letter from C.H. Gidney (Chief Secretary, NWFP) to H.W. Emerson, 25 June 1932.

[107] Note by Home Department, Government of India, undated, HOME (POL.) F. 40/5/1932.

[108] Note by C.M. Trivedi, Trivedi, 6 July 1932, HOME (POL.) F. 40/5/1932.

CONCLUSION

Civil Disobedience, both on the Frontier and in the rest of India, continued for another year and half. By April 1932 the Government of India had incarcerated over 32,500 people.[109] With Conservative support at home, Willingdon squeezed Congress throughout this period of confrontation, keeping many of its leaders in jail and cracking down on demonstrations. At the same time, the Government of India went forward on a program for Indian constitutional reforms and "constructive" work. Finally, in May 1934, Congress declared that they would contest the upcoming elections for the Central Legislative Assembly. For the time being this was a British victory, and a vindication of the "dual policy" of constitutional advance coupled with "firm action" that had characterized the British approach since the collapse of the Delhi Pact.[110]As the Secretary of State for India had stated in at the beginning of the second phase of Civil Disobedience: "Our policy… is a policy of progress combined with firmness… The dogs bark, the caravan passes on."[111]

The conflict on the Frontier continued throughout this period as well. The Viceroy inaugurated the province's Legislative Assembly, and the new members took their seats, but since they lacked any real mandate from the people of the Frontier, the body remained, in one author's words, something of a "mockery."[112] By 1933, with the Khan brothers and other leaders still in jail, the nationalist movement had lost much of its strength, although sporadic outburst still occurred in the Peshawar District.[113] The administration continued to rule the NWFP with an iron fist, however. Following the cessation of Civil Disobedience in spring 1934, local administrations throughout India lifted the ban that had been placed on Congress under the Criminal Law Amendment Act.

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[109] Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity*, p. 292.

[110] Low, *Congress and the Raj*, p. 190.

[111] Speech by Sir Samuel Hoare, 28 January 1932, quoted in Nripendra Nath Mitra (ed.), *The Indian Annual Register, January –June 1932: An Annual Digest of Public Affairs of India Recording the Nation's Activities Each Year in Matters Political, Economic, Industrial, Educational, Social, Etc.* (Calcutta: Annual Register Office, 1932), p. 414.

[112] Gupta, *North-West Frontier Province Legislature*, p. 31.

[113] North-West Frontier Province Intelligence Bureau Diary No. 7, for the Period Ending 25th February 1933, L P&S 12/3141.

The Frontier administration, however, refused to lift the ban on the "North West Frontier Provincial Jirga (Frontier Provincial Congress Committee), all district and local Jirgas or Congress Committees subordinate thereto, and all volunteer organizations connected with the above whether known as Red Shirt or otherwise."[114] Congress and the Red Shirts were still illegal.

When pressed on this issue by officials in the Government of India, the new Home Secretary, Sir Maurice Hallett, who had replaced Emerson upon the latter's promotion to the governorship of the Punjab, replied that "the Red Shirt movement was unconstitutional and inclined to violence from the start, alliance with Congress was only a tactical one."[115] In this, the Home Secretary echoed the views of the Frontier administration.[116] Ambrose Dundas, Caroe's replacement as Deputy Commissioner for Peshawar, following Caroe's promotion to the Foreign Department, spoke for many Frontier officers when he wrote.

> The ban on the Red Shirt Organization, so far from hindering political advance, has in fact facilitated it. When all was turmoil, fever and excitement there could be no political advance. Government could not even allow political meetings they were far too dangerous. But once the Red Shirt movement had been banned, everything began gradually to return to normal.[117]

[114] Letter from Sir Fazl-i-Husain (Member, Viceroy's Council, for Education, Health and Lands) to Sir Harry Haig (Home Member, Viceroy's Council), 24 May 1934, (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 11/1/1934.

[115] Note by Maurice Hallett, 27 May 1934, HOME (POL.) F. 11/1/1934.

[116] Sir Harry Haig, the Home Member who had chaired the North-West Frontier Subjects Committee in 1931, argued that the difference between Congress and the Red Shirts was as follows: "The Red Shirt organization was aiming at complete independence and the ejection of the British from India, and that this was to be achieved by violence. It may be argued that the Congress too aimed at complete independence, but their aim was so hedged about with qualifications and explanations e.g. Mr. Gandhi's 'substance of independence,' and in practice was consistent with activities so mild as conferring with the British Government on the nature of the new constitution that it must be regarded as something quite different from the plain crude aims of the Red Shirts. Instigation to overthrow the British Government by force is always regarded by us as revolutionary, and we have not the slightest intention of tolerating it from whatever quarter it comes. Jawaharlal Nehru is in jail at this moment for advocating this policy, and there he will remain until his sentence is served. There is no reason why the Red Shirts should be given latitude to organize themselves for the policy for which Jawaharlal Nehru has been sentenced to imprisonment" (Note by Sir Harry Haig, 28 May 1934, HOME (POL.) F. 11/1/1934).

[117] Extract from Letter from Deputy Commissioner, Peshawar, 3 July 1934, HOME (POL.) F. 11/1/1934.

The Government of India also acquiesced to the Frontier administrations demand that Abdul Ghaffar and Khan Sahib be barred from the province following their release from prison in August 1934.[118]

The administration therefore won this round against the Red Shirts. Yet overall the Frontier government had lost in its wider policy of sealing off the province from "India." The belief that the Frontier was different and had to be "handled" differently than the rest of the subcontinent had been the guiding principle of the Frontier administration since its inception. This had begun to slip away in the late 1920s and gone into terminal decline with the Frontier revolt of 1930. Now, not only was the NWFP integrated into the wider Indian constitutional system with the extension of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, but, more ominously, the Frontier had become a key issue for Indian nationalists – Gandhi and Nehru chief among them. From this point onward, the Frontier and British actions on the Frontier would be under the nationalist microscope. Increasingly in the 1930s and into the 1940s it would be British policy not just in the administered districts that was roundly criticized by Congress, but in the tribal areas as well.

In large part this change came not from the men like Nehru suddenly deciding that the Frontier was worthy of their attention, but from the reaction to Britain's heavy handed approach to the Frontier nationalist movement. Officials like Caroe continued to view the Frontier as a place apart, as a place where the gloves could come off when faced with an uprising – which was how the administration viewed the Red Shirt movement. The response to Civil Disobedience could be sharp throughout India, and Willingdon complained of feeling like a "sort of Mussolini," but the level of Government sponsored violence on the Frontier was unique.[119] In the coming years, the Frontier administration and those who harbored the traditional British beliefs about the Frontier would fight against nationalist plans for future policy on the North-West Frontier. But it would be a rearguard action. The Frontier was now firmly enmeshed within "political India."

[118] See Khan, *My Life and Struggle*, p. 151.
[119] Viceroy to Secretary of State, 20 December 1931, Templewood Papers E240/5.

CHAPTER SIX:
"IF THE RAMPARTS FALL, THE CITY MUST FALL ALSO": THE FRONTIER AND ALL-INDIAN CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM, 1930-1939

Ever since Lord Curzon carved the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) out of the Punjab in 1901, the British Government of India had actively sought to seal off the Indian Empire's Afghan borderlands from the rest of the subcontinent. The province was exempted from both the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 and the wider-ranging Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919. For the first three decades of the twentieth century the official political life of the province remained in a late Victorian form of suspended animation. The NWFP was allowed only two representatives in the Central Legislature, who served entirely at the pleasure of the province's Chief Commissioner, and the province was administered by a separate cadre from the rest of British India. Travel between the rest of India and the Frontier was monitored by the authorities and the Chief Commissioner enjoyed wide powers of exclusion. Moreover, the Frontier was not even entitled to the same legal rights as the rest of British India, instead being subject to the draconian set of penalties and procedures known as the Frontier Crimes Regulation.[1]

The British enforced this division between the NWFP and the rest of India for two reasons in particular. The first concern, over the strategic position of the region, was summed up in the often quoted analogy of a cigarette in a powder magazine: in a region as dangerous as the Frontier, the spark of political activity would blow the rest of India sky high.[2] The second rationale for this "perpetual purdah" concerned the closely-held belief among Frontier political officers in particular that the Pathan had no interest in the

[1] See Chapters Two and Three.

[2] Draft by Major (Clement) Attlee on the Simon Commission's Recommendations for NWFP – Suggested Continuation to SC/J566, 22 November 1929, Simon Papers, India Office Records (IOR), F77/49. For the nationalist condemnation of this argument see Allah Bukhsh Yusufi, *The Frontier Tragedy: An Account of the Inhuman Acts of Repression and Terrorism, Blockades, Loot, Incendiarism & Massacres – Through Which the People of the North-West Frontier Province Have Had to Go During the Present Disturbance* (Peshawar: All India Khilafat Committee, 1930), p. 7. The President of the Peshawar Khilafat Committee, Yusufi wrote: "The spark, if any, must consist not in the people's power but in the people's attitude towards the Government. A contented people would make the best fire proof for that powder magazine, no matter how strong their hands."

political "antics" of a "Hindu dominated" Indian nationalism.[3] This static vision of the Frontier was challenged, however, with the rapid rise of Abdul Ghaffar Khan's nationalist movement in the spring of 1930.

This chapter examines the efforts by members of the Indian Government, the Indian Army, and civilian pressure groups, to use the argument that the Frontier was strategically vulnerable and under constant threat of external attack as a primary weapon against the extension of greater constitutional freedoms to India in the "critical decade" of the 1930s.[4] Opponents of the 1935 Government of India Bill argued that Indian nationalists possessed a "disturbingly shallow" understanding of the threats to India's North-West Frontier and could not be trusted with its defence.[5] Since, as one prominent

[3] Yusufi, *The Frontier Tragedy*, p. 11. On the British insistence that the Pathans had no interest in the supposed nationalist promise of a "Hindu Raj" see, for instance, Sir William Barton, "The Problems of Law and Order Under a Responsible Government in the North-West Frontier Province," in the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 19, 1 (1932), p. 11.

[4] For the argument that the 1930s constitutes a pivotal period in the demission of British power on the subcontinent see, for instance, Judith M. Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy, 2nd Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), Chapter Five.

[5] Report of the Expert Committee on the Defence of India, 1938-1939 (Chatfield Committee), 30 January 1939, (IOR) L MIL 5/886. The Government of India Act, 1935 was designed to set India on the path of some form of Dominion status. While it provided a number of reforms both at the central and provincial level it was designed to, as Lord Linlithgow noted, "hold India to the Empire." It included provisions for the continued British management of India's defence establishment and finance and continued the long term process of devolving power to the provinces at the expense of the center – thus robbing Congress of effective central control and (it was hoped) necessitating India's continued involvement with Britain in financial and military matters. Signed by the King in October 1935, the Act's main provisions came into effect on 1 April 1937. They included virtual provincial autonomy from Delhi and London and increased provincial financial resources in order to make this policy a reality. It abolished dyarchy at the provincial level, with Indian ministers, who were responsible to the electorate, in charge of all branches of provincial governments. Ministers' authority was subject to certain safeguards by the governor, including reserve powers, for use in such cases as the protection of minorities and the rights of civil servants, or the breakdown of the constitution (article 93). The franchise, though still based on property qualification, was enlarged. More than 30 million Indians now had suffrage – about 1/6 of all adult Indians.

Provisions were also made (but never realized) for a federation of British and princely India with an elected Council of State and a Federal Assembly which would have power over internal affairs. A new form of dyarchy would be introduced at the center, with the Viceroy and his council having control of defence and foreign affairs. The federal aspects of the Act came into effect only if a sufficient number of states had acceded to the Federation in order to fill half of the seats allotted to them in the upper house and to endure that at least half the total population of the States was in the federation – which never happened (See Carl Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire: The British Conservative Party and the 1935 Constitution* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Ltd., 1986); and Judith M. Brown *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy*, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 282-300.

critic insisted, the Frontier was "the very ramparts of the city of India," when these ramparts fell then the "city must fall also."[6] Nationalist control of India's defence not only imperiled the subcontinent, but the future of the British Empire as well. Few, if any, in the 1930s could imagine an India – even an independent India – not intimately linked to Britain in matters of imperial defence. As Sir George Dunbar, a former Frontier officer who was then serving as the councilor to the Indian princes during the second Round Table Conference observed:

> Congress may sow dragon's teeth, but it cannot make an All-Indian Army rise miraculously at its command, capable of holding the Frontiers. Failure to hold them, and this not an alarmist view, would mean invasion, chaos, and anarchy throughout India…Nor are the Frontier a matter for India alone. What happens upon them is of Imperial interest, and might at any time affect the entire fabric of the British Commonwealth of Nations.[7]

Thus, the future defence of the North-West Frontier became a primary argument against the extension of greater constitutional freedom to the entire subcontinent.

At the most extreme, those who made this argument called for a moratorium on any further reform and even a roll-back of the earlier Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. This effort eventually met with failure. At the more moderate end, these administrators, soldiers, and retired India hands argued with greater success that the external threat to the Frontiers meant that Britain, while devolving a number of other powers, must retain India's defence portfolio for the foreseeable future. As such, the 1935 Act retained Britain's control over the Indian Army and the Frontier's defence establishment. Since "nothing short of complete independence, carrying full control of defence" would be satisfactory to the Congress party, this development became a major point of contention between the Congress and the Raj.[8]

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[6] Lt.-Colonel C.E. Bruce, C.S.I.. C.I.E., C.B.E., "Memorandum" in *Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform [Session 1932-33], Volume 2C: Minutes of Evidence* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1934), p. 1689, NMML.

[7] Sir George Dunbar, *Frontiers* (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, Ltd., 1932), p. 315.

[8] Indian National Congress, *Report of the 45th Indian National Congress* (Karachi: R.K. Sidhwa & Tarachand J. Lalwani, 1932).

THE DEFENCE OF INDIA AND THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER

Throughout the 1920s the pitfalls of defending India were often cited as a key reason for denying constitutional reforms to the NWFP. Moreover, the security of the Frontier, which the British saw as the primary military threat to India up until the eve of the Second World War, was also inextricably linked to the control of the Indian Army.[9] Emphasizing the external menace to the Frontier guaranteed that the British, rather than Indian nationalist, would have the final say on imperial rule in India. As Lord Rawlinson, the Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, privately noted in 1923: "here in India we can always play off the Afghan menace against the Indian agitator when he squeals for complete Indianization and pure Self-Government."[10] This cynicism aside, the Indian Army was transfixed in the late 1920s by the possibility of an Afghan-Bolshevik alliance on their North-West Frontier.[11]

Concerns about a possible pact between Afghanistan's modernizing Amir, Amanullah, and the Soviet Union, was paramount in the Army's testimony to the Indian Statutory (Simon) Commission in 1928-29. Witnesses summoned before the Simon Commission emphasized the probable Soviet and Afghan threat to the North-West Frontier. The former Chief of the Indian General Staff, Major General J.R.E. Charles, and the current Deputy Chief, Major General Walter Kirke, testified that India's defence was of a "special character," and that the only real danger they had to fear was "from the North-West Frontier, whether that be from the tribes…or from peoples beyond it, or from a greater power behind them." By this they meant the Soviet Union. For most officers, the "defence of India" was, for all practical purposes, analogous to the "the defence of the North-West Frontier."[12]

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[9] Report of the Sub-Committee on the Defence Problems of India and the Composition and Organization of the Army and Royal Air Force in India, 12 May 1938 (Pownall Sub-Committee), L MIL 5/886.

[10] Lord Rawlinson of Trent (Commander-in-Chief, India) to Lt.-General Sir Walter Congreve, 3 April 1923, in Mark Jacobsen (ed.), *Rawlinson in India* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2002), p. 152.

[11] See Committee of Imperial Defence: First Report of the Defence of India Sub-Committee, December 2 1927, National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA) CAB 16/83. For more detail see Chapter Two.

[12] Indian Statutory Commission Interview with Major-General J.R.E. Charles, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., Director of Military Operations and Intelligence, War Office, 26 June 1929, Simon Papers (IOR) F77/56;

Simon's commission took this evidence to heart.[13] The Committee's final report emphasized Frontier defence as the primary purpose of the Army in India. Furthermore, the constant "menace" to the Frontier was "without parallel in any other part of the Empire." The pressing danger on the Frontier convinced the committee that for decades to come it would be impossible for the Indian Army to dispense with "a very considerable British element."[14] The nature of this external "menace" to the gates of India meant that the subcontinent's defence *must* reside in British hands. The Committee observed:

> If the defence of India were to fail, it is not only India that would suffer. Indian lives and Indian property would be the first to bear the brunt of a hostile invasion, but they would not be alone…the whole Empire would be involved.

It was for this precise reason that Britain could not renounce its role in India's land security:

> The North-West Frontier is not only the frontier of India: it is an international frontier of the first importance from the military point of view for the whole Empire. On India's frontier alone is the Empire open to any serious threat of attack by land, and it must be remembered that such an attack might be delivered not on account of any quarrel with India, but because of a dispute between the Empire and a foreign power…[15]

If the gates of India fell, India would fall. If India fell then the entire position of "Britain in the East" would be dangerously undermined. Based on this scenario, the defence of the North-West Frontier and India was "inseparable" from Britain.[16]

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and Joint Conference Interview with Major-General W.M. St. George Kirke, C.B., D.S.O., Deputy Chief of the Indian General Staff, 22 March 1929, Kirke Papers (IOR) E396/18.

[13] It is worth noting that Simon's draft recommendations were vetted by the General Staff before publication (Notes for Sir John Simon on a Draft "The Army in India," by Major-General Walter St. George Kirke, 5 April 1929, Simon Papers (IOR) F77/55).

[14] Indian Statutory Commission, *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, Vol. II, *Recommendations* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1930), p. 167. Thus, the Frontier threat helped the British ward off calls for a rapid Indianization of the Army's officer corps – something most serving British officers viewed as an unmitigated disaster (See, for instance, Field Marshal Sir Claud Jacob, Testimony to the Indian Statutory Commission, 20 June 1929, Simon Papers F77/56. Also see Pradeep P. Barua, *Gentlemen of the Raj: The Indian Army Officer Corps, 1817-1949* (Westport: Praeger, 2003), Chapter Four).

[15] *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, Vol. II, pp. 173-174. The argument that India could be endangered by an imperial dispute elsewhere was a somewhat ineffective line of argument, since it could be said that without the imperial connection the external threat to India would evaporate. This stance became increasingly common among Indian nationalists in the 1930s and of course during the Second World War, when India was mobilized and then invaded while fighting "Britain's war."

[16] India Office Note on the Army in India, 15 September 1929, Simon Papers F77/55.

This argument had been anticipated by the Indian National Congress, which was taking an increasing interest in defence and the Indian Army. The 1928 Nehru Report, which was designed as an alternative to the report drawn up by the Simon Commission, argued that safeguards on defence made any claims to home rule meaningless. Citing the views of the British constitutional scholar and Sanskitist, Arthur Berriedale Keith, who argued that "self-government without an effective India Army is an impossibility and no amount of protests or demonstrations, or denunciations of the Imperial Government can avail to alter that fact," the Nehru report called for true cabinet control of India's defences with genuine Indian input. The defence reservations stipulated in the Simon Report came nowhere near satisfying these demands.[17]

By the time the recommendations of the Simon Commission were released in 1930, events in India had rendered it obsolete. Yet the views expresses in the Simon report continued to hem in the discussions in the next round of Indian constitutional negotiations: the Indian Round Table Conferences of 1930-31. During the initial Round Table Conference in January 1931, the subcommittee charged with the role of the Indian Army in the proposed Indian federation was prohibited from discussing the issue of control over India's defence. Instead, the subcommittee, which included the future Secretary of State for India, Samuel Hoare and the future founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, was charged with discussing the speed of Indianization among the Indian Army's officer corps and the foundation of an Indian military academy.[18] The British still hoped that if they appeared to concede on these smaller issues it would deflect attention from the larger question of control over the Indian Army. [19]

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[17] All Parties Conference, *Report of the Committee appointed by the Conference to Determine the Principles of the Constitution for India: Together with a Summary of the Proceedings of the Conference Held at Lucknow* (Allahabad: All India Congress Committee, 1928), pp. 12-13 and pp. 120-121.

[18] *Indian Round Table Conference: 12th November, 1930-19th January, 1931, Proceedings of Sub-Committees* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1931), p. 291.

[19] Indian Round Table Conference: Draft Statement by His Majesty's Government (Circulated by Direction of the Prime Minister), 13 January 1931, (TNA) CAB 24/219.

CHANGING CONCEPTIONS OF THE FRONTIER THREAT, 1930-1934

In the opening years of the 1930s, the British continued to believe that the defence of India from tribal, Afghan, and Soviet incursions remained the premier responsibility of the Indian Army. Moreover, these old threats were now joined by the new specter of Indian nationalism. The Red Shirts and Frontier nationalism certainly posed a risk to the British regime on the Frontier, but questions remained as to whether it was on the same level as the external threats that preoccupied the British. Moreover, there was the additional question of whether the old fears of Russia, Afghanistan and the tribes were still legitimate in a time of immense change.

Although the Government of India and the Frontier administration had initially believed that the Abdul Ghaffar Khan's nationalist movement on the Frontier was affiliated with or bankrolled by Moscow, by June 1930 the authorities in both Peshawar and Simla had concluded that the Red Shirts were in fact home grown.[20] In July, London confirmed the speculation, concluding that it was "most unlikely that any successful charge can be brought against the Soviet Government, or even against the Comintern."[21] Many in the Political Service and the Army, however, continued to harbor fears about a potential fantastic mix of nationalism, Bolshevik propaganda, Afghan influence, and Islamic fanaticism in the tribal areas.

Yet by 1931, Afghanistan, the central pivot of potential unrest on the Frontier and the preeminent threat to stability of the trans-border region had ceased to be a legitimate problem. After the overthrow of the Afghan King, Amanullah, in October 1928, an ethnic Tajik, Habibullah Ghazi, known as the "Bandit King," seized power shortly thereafter and held much of the country by June 1929. The Pathan dominated eastern and southern portions of Afghanistan remained outside his control, however, and by late summer numerous Pathan tribes had rallied to General Nadir Khan, a cousin of the deposed Amanullah. After a large contingent of Wazir tribesmen from the British side of the

[20] Express Letter from Chief Commissioner, NWFP to Home Dept., Simla, 12 June 1930, National Archives of India (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 11/III/1930.

[21] Extract from Moscow Despatch No. 374, 1 July 1930, (IOR) L P&S 12/3122.

Durand Line joined his forces, Nadir successfully attacked the capital. Habibullah Ghazi fled, and on October 16th Nadir was proclaimed King of Afghanistan.[22]

After the difficult ten year reign of Amanullah and the chaotic ten month reign of Habibullah, the British hoped that Nadir Shah (as Nadir Khan became upon his accession) would bring stability to Afghanistan. In tandem with this hope was the desire that Nadir would set himself up as a friendly power – someone with whom the British could do business. The new King quickly sought to fulfill these expectations, assuring the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, that he had no intention of continuing the pro-Soviet and anti-British policies of Amanullah.[23]

The British had evacuated their legation in Kabul in February 1929 at the height of the Afghan Civil War, but in May 1930 British and Indian personnel returned to Afghanistan under the leadership of the new British Minister, the Indian Political Officer (and noted ornithologist), Richard Maconachie. Maconachie, who had recently witnessed the collapse of the Frontier administration while waiting to take up his new post, took an immediate liking to Nadir Shah.[24] The conspicuous absence of Afghan involvement in the tribal "disturbances" that accompanied the nationalist rising in the NWFP fortified these impressions. Based on Maconachie's assessment, both the British Foreign Office and the India Office came to see Nadir as an ally. Officials in the India Office noted that it seemed certain that the friendly attitude of the Afghan government was by no means a "blind," but dictated by "a keen appreciation of their own interests and also by a genuine dislike and distrust of the Soviet." Moreover, they believed that Nadir took the long view that the continuation of the "British Raj in India is in the interests of Afghanistan, as they surmised by comments the King had made to Maconachie about the Civil Disobedience movement in India. [25] Nadir stated:

> That it was only the support of [HMG] through a British Government of India which enabled Afghanistan to resist political or military penetration from Bolshevik Russia. The

[22] Note of the Rebellion on Afghanistan from 1st July 1929 to the Accession of Nadir Shah, 16th November 1929, (TNA) FO 371/13992.

[23] Viceroy to Secretary of State for India, 13 March 1930, Halifax Papers C152/6.

[24] Richard Maconachie (HMG Minister, Kabul) to Arthur Henderson (Foreign Secretary, HMG), 23 May 1930, (TNA) FO 402/12.

[25] India Office Note on Relations with Afghanistan, 1931, (IOR) PO 5/23.

> inevitable result of self-government for India, if granted while the policy of Russia remained what it now was, would be that first Afghanistan, and then India herself, would be dismembered by the Soviets, and ultimately absorbed by Russia.[26]

Maconachie reported in 1931 that despite Abdul Ghaffar's attempts to gain support among the trans-border tribesmen, Nadir's lieutenants were doing everything in their power to keep Red Shirt emissaries away from the Afghan tribes.[27]

Nadir's actions as he consolidated his power over Afghanistan in 1930 and 1931 suggest that Maconachie's optimistic view was correct. In the wake of Amanullah's attempts at modernization with limited Bolshevik support in the 1920s, Nadir saw the Soviet Union as a potentially destabilizing force. The King was concerned about Indian nationalism for two reasons in particular: the Frontier nationalist decision to support the claims of the ex-King Amanullah, and the belief that a weak "Congress Raj" would be unable to prevent their own tribesmen from crossing the Durand Line and undermining the regime in Kabul.[28] The last point was particularly salient since Nadir owed his throne to the Wazir tribesmen that had joined his forces in September 1929.[29] Nadir wanted an alliance with the British and both his actions and his interests supported the notion that his regime would remain stable and friendly.

This conclusion was difficult for many in the Political service to accept. Most Frontier officers had spent their careers foiling Afghan perfidy, and the idea that Afghanistan was now a friendly power above Russian/Soviet influence was almost unfathomable. Sir Evelyn Howell, the Government of India's Foreign Secretary, and J.C. Walton, the Political Secretary in the India Office, both believed that a "pro-Amanullah rebellion was likely to break out. In this event, "Russia's support would either be secret or open." Since the "line between aggression by an invading force and aggression by open and unconcealed support of a rebel army seems to be a thin one" this would put

[26] Despatch from His Majesty's Minister, Kabul, to His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, London, 6 March 1930, (IOR) L P&S 12/3155.

[27] Telegram from Maconachie to Foreign Department, Government of India, 25 June 1931, L P&S 12/3155.

[28] Viceroy to Secretary of State (Viscount Peel), 14 February 1929, FO 371/13992.

[29] Extract from Annual Report on Afghanistan, 1931, L P&S 12/3155.

Britain in the position of going to war with the Soviet Union.[30] With this sort of scenario in mind, men like Walton and Howell saw any form of alliance with Afghanistan as folly due to the general unreliability and dishonesty of the Afghans.

Maconachie, who was known for his inductive reasoning, saw no reason to withhold full support from the new Afghan regime, and many were inclined to follow the lead of the man on the spot. Howell, more inclined towards generalization and possessing the Frontier officer's natural distrust of Kabul, fought Maconachie vigorously.[31] A bitter dispute over Britain's approach to Afghanistan arose between the two men, both of whom were ill for months at a time in 1931-32.[32] In London, Walton chalked this dispute up to the Government of India's (and the Political Service's) resistance to recognizing new factors in Afghanistan. Walton believed that the new Afghan regime was a radical departure from Amanullah's, and cited "the present Afghan Govt.'s anti-Russian complex (it is hardly too strong a word), which must inevitably incline them to a policy of friendship with H.M.G." For his part, Maconachie believed that Howell and other political officers were tied to the past. He thought that most Politicals "always regard the Afghan factor in their frontier problem as the same as it always has been," and as a result their policy prescriptions were insufficiently adaptable.[33] Maconachie was therefore asking not only for a reassessment of the Afghan question, but a whole new approach to the nature of the Frontier problem.

Ultimately, the entire question of how the new Afghan regime should be handled rested on the "Soviet threat" to Afghanistan and the Indian Frontier. Maconachie argued that while the Soviet Union remained a major threat to Afghan stability, the fact that the Soviet Union had done nothing to spread revolution during the upheavals of 1928-29 meant that perhaps the Russians were, as Indian nationalists incessantly claimed,

[30] J.C. Walton to Sir Evelyn Howell, 7 April 1932, Walton Papers (IOR) D545/6.

[31] Private Letter from General Sir Sydney Muspratt to Sir Malcolm Seton (Deputy Undersecretary of State for India), 6 May 1932), L PO 5/23.

[32] Letter from Eric Mieville (Private Secretary to the Viceroy) to W.D. Croft (Deputy Undersecretary of State for India), 25 April 1932, L PO 5/23. Howell was suffering from exhaustion whereas Maconachie was plagued by dysentery (Howell to Walton, 10 September 1931, Walton Papers D545/6).

[33] Confidential Note by J.C. Walton, 5 May 1932, L PO 5/23.

something of a bogey.[34] Support for Nadir would therefore encourage the integrity of Afghanistan without unduly provoking the Soviets.[35] Officials in India, however, experienced continued suspicion that despite all evidence to the contrary, "Red-Shirt agitators," Congress sympathizers, and Bolshevik intriguers were "closely connected with one another."[36] These suspicions were accompanied by a genuine fear of growing Russian influence in the tribal areas.

As early as July 1930, the Resident in Waziristan Ralph Griffith, noted the large number of gold Russian Rubles in circulation on the Frontier. Rubles were not in public circulation in Afghanistan, he argued, and could have only come from Bolshevik agents.[37] These reports were followed by equally flimsy claims of "Bolshevik intrigue" by the intelligence services on the Frontier in 1931 and 1932.[38] Based on rumors, officials continually reported that "Soviet agents" were combing the North-West Frontier, searching for "soft-spots" where they could "engender and propagate their principles of revolt" among the trans-border tribes. Since the "fanatical" Pathan had a natural antipathy to Bolshevism, the solution to this threat, many argued, was a propaganda campaign stressing the fact that these inducements to revolt were orchestrated by the "oppressors of Islam beyond the Oxus," and one was launched in 1932.[39]

The principal force behind the anti-Bolshevik propaganda campaign in the tribal tracts was Sir Ralph Griffith, now Governor of the NWFP. Writing in the spring of 1932, Griffith informed Aubrey Metcalfe, who was serving as Indian Foreign Secretary while Howell was on leave, that Bolshevik agents had recently been intercepted carrying Rs. 4,000/- (£270) across the border and that there were "innumerable reports" of secret meetings between tribesmen and Communist agents. In the midst of his campaign to

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[34] Yusufi, *The Frontier Tragedy*, p. 11.

[35] Despatch from Maconachie to His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Sir John Simon), 20 March 1933), L PO 5/23.

[36] A Summary of Bolshevik Intrigue in Dir, Swat, and Bajaur from the 1st November, 1931 to the 31st December 1932, (IOR) L P&S 12/3186.

[37] Secret Memorandum from Political Agent, South Waziristan (Major C.E.U. Bremner) to the Resident in Waziristan (Griffith), June 14 1930, L P&S 12/3122.

[38] On the Soviet side there is little to support these contentions. See, for example, Milan Hauner, *What is Asia to Us?: Russia's Asian Heartland Yesterday and Today* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990).

[39] A Summary of Bolshevik Intrigue in Dir, Swat, and Bajaur.

destroy the Red Shirts in the administered districts in the Frontier, the Governor suggested a wide scale propaganda campaign premised on the plight of the Bokharan refugees from the Soviet Union who had immigrated to the tribal belt. Griffith noted that along with the dissemination of poetry describing Bolshevik atrocities against Muslims in Central Asia, "money speaks" and asked Metcalfe if the Government of India would be willing to pay for such a campaign.[40]

Metcalfe liked the idea, as did the Indian General Staff, and the plan, which was estimated to cost Rs. 20,000/- (£1,333) a year, was forwarded for approval from London.[41] The Secretary of State, Sir Samuel Hoare, cabled his permission in October, and the scheme commenced.[42] Within the year, however, officials in London were beginning to harbor doubts about the efficacy of Griffith's propaganda campaign. J.C. Walton, in the India Office, had originally supported the plan, but he now believed that there was little evidence of Bolshevik activity on the Frontier.[43] Walton's new skepticism was shared by Metcalfe, who, upon Howell's retirement on grounds of ill health in January 1933, took the reins as Foreign Secretary in Simla.[44] Metcalfe was less dogmatic than Howell, who tended towards paranoia when it came to the Soviet Union, and had doubts about the actual Bolshevik threat to the Frontier.[45] He believed that the Government of India was far too much under the influence of the General Staff, which,

[40] Sir Ralph Griffith (Governor, NWFP) to Aubrey Metcalfe (Foreign Secretary, Government of India), 27 May 1932, (IOR) L P&S 12/3169.

[41] Metcalfe to Griffith, 18 June 1932, L P&S 12/3169; and Government of India, Foreign and Political Department, to Secretary of State for India, 15 September 1932, L P&S 12/3169.

[42] Hoare to the Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, 13 October 1932, L P&S 12/3169.

[43] Walton to Metcalfe, 27 August 1932, Walton Papers D545/9; and Note by J.C. Walton, 22 October 1933, L P&S 12/3169.

[44] Metcalfe to Walton, 30 January 1933, Walton Papers D545/9. Howell, though past the age of retirement in 1933, enjoyed another 35 years of health, living to the age of 94, comfortable in the sinecure of a fellowship at Emanuel College, Cambridge. Howell eventually concluded that the Afghan regime was friendly, but still doubted whether it had staying power (Sir Evelyn Howell, K.C.S.I., C.S.I., "Some Problems of the Indian Frontier," in the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 22, 3 (1934), pp. 181-198).

[45] See E.B. Howell to Sir Denys Bray, 27 June 1927, (IOR) L P&S 10/1152. For an idea of Metcalfe's geopolitical thinking see Sir Aubrey Metcalfe, "India's Foreign Relations Now and in the Future," in *International Affairs*, 21, 4 (1945), pp. 485-496.

he argued, tended to exaggerate the dangers of both Afghanistan and the Soviet Union.[46] Although the scheme was implemented for over a year, the Government of India ended the campaign in March 1934, ostensibly on financial grounds.[47]

That the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, agreed to end Griffith's program was indicative of a wider change within the Government of India at the time. Unlike previous Viceroys, such as Irwin, who accepted the prevailing attitudes about the Frontier threat as a truism, Willingdon harbored misgivings about the Frontier mindset of both the Army and the Political Service. Writing to Hoare, the Viceroy noted:

> It is so difficult to make the political people, who have been in control for so long, feel that conditions have altered up there very much during the last 20 years and that, from an international point of view, with regard to Afghanistan and Russia, they must take a wider outlook than they have in the past. But that is the real problem: they try and carry on just the same as in the days of George Roos-Keppel.[48]

Willingdon believed – like Maconachie – that the nature of the threat on the Frontier had changed, especially since Amanullah's ousting in 1928. Yet the Viceroy was a conservative. He had no patience for Congress and was convinced that nationalist control of India's foreign and military policy would be catastrophic. In discussing India's future he fell back on the Soviet threat:

> We do, however, feel that any slackening of control by the Central Government over the internal or the Frontier administration of India, which may result from the impending constitutional changes, will afford additional opportunities to the Soviet Government for inducing hostile propaganda into this country. The Soviet will not be slow to take advantage of such opportunities.[49]

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[46] Metcalfe to Walton, 25 December 1933, Walton Papers D545/9; and Metcalfe to Walton, 20 March 1934, Walton Papers D545/9.

[47] For description of the propaganda campaign, see Memorandum from the Chief Secretary, Government of North-West Frontier Province (O.K. Caroe), 4 October 1933, L P&S 12/3169; for the cessation of the program see Metcalfe to Griffith, 30 March 1934, L P&S 12/3169. In fact, as Metcalfe confided to Walton, the scheme was ended because the "Director Intelligence Bureau and the General Staff, who had between then provided the funds up to date, were thoroughly dissatisfied with the way in which the money was being spent. They were convinced that most of it was going into the pockets of the officer, whom Griffith had entrusted with this duty or into those of his friends. I do not feel sure that they were entirely right in these suspicions, but the fact remains that they both considered that they could spend their secret service funds to better advantage elsewhere" (Metcalfe to Walton, 25 June 1934, Walton Papers D545/9).

[48] Willingdon to Hoare, 26 June 1933, Templewood Papers (IOR) E240/5.

[49] Government of India Despatch No. 1 to the Secretary of State for India: Re-Examination of the Conclusions Contained in the Report of the Defence of India Subcommittee of December 19, 1927, 5 June 1933, L PO 5/23.

This point was complemented by dire warnings about possible tribal combinations descending onto the Indian plains.

THE WHITE PAPER, INDIAN EMPIRE SOCIETY, AND THE 1935 INDIA ACT

The "constitutional changes" the Viceroy spoke of were the ongoing negotiations over what would become the Government of India Act, 1935. The attempt to find a federal settlement for India at the three Round Table Conferences of 1930-32 had ended in failure and by the close of the final conference on Christmas Eve, 1932, the Conservative dominated British Cabinet had hammered out their own federal scheme for India.[50] Spearheaded by the Conservative Secretary of State for India, Sir Samuel Hoare, this plan, which became a White Paper entitled *Proposals for Indian Constitutional Reform* in March 1933, called for greater Indian control over the provinces and a federal government at the center. Foreign and defence policies would remain a reserved subject under the Viceroy and finances would be rigorously policed by the Viceroy and ICS mandarins. With the White Paper in hand, Hoare appointed a Joint Parliamentary Select Committee in the spring of 1933 to begin the parliamentary phase of what would become the Government of India Act.[51]

Despite the many safeguards included in any scheme for a federal India, there were many (especially retired Indian Army and Political Service personnel) who were dead set against any further constitutional reform in India. These concessions were viewed as total surrender to Congress "tyranny." This opposition to Indian reform began in 1930 after the outbreak of Civil Disobedience and the realization that the Simon recommendations were a dead letter. From the beginning, resistance to reform was influenced by long-standing beliefs about the Frontier and the Congresses inability to manage the Empire's most vital land frontier.

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[50] Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire*, p. 86.

[51] See *Proposals for Indian Constitutional Reform (Cmd. 4268)* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1933).

The chief vehicle for the anti-reform agitation was the Indian Empire Society (IES), founded by the former Frontier officer and Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, Sir Michael O'Dwyer in 1930. The IES was a diehard organization of retired soldiers and Indian Civil Servants that viewed the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms as folly and advocated direct British rule over India, preferably with an iron fist.[52] While this antediluvian aspect of the society was, as one historian dubbed it, an exercise in "imperial quixotry," the IES also vigorously fought any further attempt at Indian reform.[53] The society gained a staunch ally and parliamentary leadership when Winston Churchill, who having shed his earlier liberal views on British rule in India, characterized by his assault on General Dyer, had decided to nail his colors to the mast of diehard opposition to Indian reform, joined in October 1930.[54] Over the next five years, a period subsequently referred to as Churchill's "wilderness years," the future prime minister and "savior of his country" became the principal opponent of the Indian reform bill.[55]

Churchill's experience of India consisted of a short stint in, as he described it, this "land of bores and snobs," as a 22-year-old subaltern in 1896-97.[56] Most of Churchill's time in India was spent within the confines of an officers' mess in Bangalore, but in August 1897 he was invited to visit the Frontier as a press correspondent. There he was to report on the major Frontier revolt that had broken out that year among the Afridis in the Malakand tribal agency. At last the young Churchill, like countless British officers before and after him, had the opportunity to "see a bit of action" in the form of Frontier warfare. The rising was put down by the fall of 1897 and Churchill left the Frontier at the end of

[52] A number of Churchmen and British Evangelicals were also involved with the battle against Indian constitutional reform, which they saw as an abdication of Britain's Christian mission in the sub-continent (see Gerald Studdert-Kennedy's fascinating *British Christians, Indian Nationalists and the Raj* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991), Chapter Seven).

[53] Bridge, *Holding India*, pp. 48-49.

[54] For Churchill's views on the Amritsar massacre and Reginald Dyer see Nigel Collett, *The Butcher of Amritsar: General Reginald Dyer* (London: Hambeldon, 2005).

[55] See Martin Gilbert, *Winston Churchill: The Wilderness Years* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1981); and A.J.P. Taylor, *English History, 1914-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 4. Also see Patrick Michael O'Neil, "Winston S. Churchill's Philosophy of Empire: The Mind of the Imperialist" (State University of New York at Binghamton Dissertation, 1993); and Arthur Herman, *Gandhi and Churchill: The Epic Rivalry That Destroyed an Empire and Forged Our Age (New York: Bantam, 2008).*

[56] Churchill to his mother, quoted in Martin Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1991), p. 65.

October, but his time there had made a lasting impression. Churchill wrote his first of many books, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force*, about his experiences on the Frontier and came away with clear ideas about the nature of the Pathan, whom he viewed as bloodthirsty and uncivilized. It is telling that he opened his book with a quote by Lord Salisbury stating that Frontier wars were "but the surf that marks the edge and the advance of the wave of civilization."[57] Churchill, who had experienced very little of India save the North-West Frontier, was to extend this idea of civilization to the whole of British rule over India, as he battled alongside the "bores and snobs" against Indian constitutional reform.[58]

Churchill and his colleagues in the IES fought the process of Indian reform throughout the Round Table conferences. But it was only after the publication of the White Paper and the announcement of the Joint Parliamentary Committee that the IES and its parliamentary sister organization, the Indian Defence League (IDL) swung into ardent action. In this fight, Churchill, this "ducal bird of paradise" was pitted against his antithesis, the Secretary of State for India, Sir Samuel Hoare, a "common or garden baronet sprung from Quaker banking stock."[59] Assisted by the timely appearance of Katherine Mayo's *Mother India*, which portrayed India in a scandalous and "uncivilized" light, the IES, IDL and their allies in the press began a concerted propaganda campaign designed to portray India as backward, uncivilized and thoroughly unprepared to take up the reins of its own governance.[60]

Much of this propaganda was boilerplate focusing on the most salacious and "effeminate" aspects of Hindu or Indian society. In his *The Underworld of India*, one of

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[57] Winston S. Churchill, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force* (London: Longmans, 1898), Front Matter and pp. 17-19.

[58] Churchill, along with a number of other "diehards" on Indian constitutional reform, such as Field marshal Sir Claud Jacob, Lord Salisbury and Lord Birkenhead prior to his death, had all served on the Committee of Imperial Defence's Subcommittee on the Defence of India. In this capacity they were deeply involved with possible Soviet predations into Afghanistan and the North-West Frontier during the Soviet 'scare" of the late 1920s. It is likely that this influenced their decision to be relentlessly opposed to India gaining any form of control over its own defence establishment (see Committee of Imperial Defence: Minutes of the 223rd Meeting, 17 March 1927, CAB 16/83).

[59] See Piers Brendon, *The Dark Valley: A Panorama of the 1930s* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), p. 423).

[60] See Katherine Mayo, *Mother India* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1927); and Mrinali Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

the most prolific authors in this vein, the former Quartermaster General of the Indian Army, Lieut.-General Sir George Fletcher MacMunn, argued that in India "anything and everything that deals with sex, procreation, union and human passion is worshipped and glorified."[61] Yet much of the material also emphasized the threat posed to this weak and effeminate India by the Frontier and its "lawless" Pathan population.[62] A striking example of this was in the Rothermere press's *Daily Mail 1934 India Blue Book*, which featured a photograph of a Pathan with the caption "Ever ready to plunder the Indian plains – a North-West frontier mountaineer."[63]

True to his status as a soldier, MacMunn, who wrote an astonishing 35 books between his retirement in 1925 and 1940, tended to focus on the relationship between the Frontier, India, and the survival of the British Empire. In volumes such as *Turmoil and Tragedy in India* (1935) and *The Romance of the Indian Frontiers* (1931), he posited that the trans-border tribesmen dreamed of descending upon the Indian plains to rape and pillage the populace. The only thing that prevented them from attaining this goal was the knowledge that they would have to confront a British led Indian Army. MacMunn argued that there was a clear lesson from the tribal uprising of 1919: the apparent evacuation of posts in Waziristan had led to a full-scale war. Now the British appeared to be surrendering to the Congress "revolutionaries" over the whole of India. MacMunn argued that the floodgates of anarchy would open and give the tribesmen *carte blanche* to invade India.[64]

The IES chose MacMunn to provide expert testimony before the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform in October 1933. Here the retired General repeated his charges about the Frontier and India, arguing that the Red

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[61] Lt.-General Sir George Fletcher MacMunn, *The Underworld of India* (London: Jarrolds, 1933), p. 272.

[62] One of the IES's foremost members was that great chronicler of the British on the Frontier: Rudyard Kipling (See David Gilmour, *The Long Recessional: The Imperial Life of Rudyard Kipling* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2002).

[63] Daily Mail, *The Daily Mail 1934 India Blue Book* (London: Associated Newspapers, 1934), p. 40.

[64] Lieut.-General Sir George MacMunn, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., D.S.O., *Turmoil and Tragedy in India: 1914 and After* (London: Jarrolds, 1935), Chapters Twelve through Fifteen; and Lt.-General Sir George MacMunn, K.C.B., K.C.S.I., D.S.O., *The Romance of the Indian Frontiers* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1931), Chapter Ten.

Shirt movement in the NWFP resulted from the removal of a strong hand. Rumors that the British were leaving, MacMunn claimed, not only led to tribal incursions into Peshawar, but also resulted in "rebellion" throughout the settled districts. The introduction of greater democracy in India would remove this deterrent to chaos altogether.[65]

The Frontier was in fact a principal concern of the IES delegation to the Joint Parliamentary Committee. The delegation was led by Lt.-Colonel C.E. Bruce, a veteran Frontier officer who had served as Resident in Waziristan and ended his Indian career in 1931 as Chief Commissioner of Baluchistan. The IES included several thousand members, including dozens of members of parliament, peers of the realm, and high ranking retired military officers. That a Frontier veteran was given center stage in this testimony speaks to the importance that many of these staunch opponents to Indian reform placed on the effect constitutional change would have on Frontier defence.[66]

C.E. Bruce's Frontier roots went deep. His father, R.I. Bruce, had served under the legendary Robert Sandeman in Baluchistan in the 1870s and had become one of the first disciples of the "Sandeman system," a method of tribal management that was to be attempted throughout India and the Middle East – most notably Iraq.[67] The Sandeman system as it had developed in Baluchistan was essentially a policy of indirect rule based on allowances, tribal chiefs as agents of control, and the use of force when necessary – it was intimately connected with the forward school.[68] In the 1890s, R.I. Bruce served as Commissioner for Derajat (in charge of Waziristan), and attempted to apply the

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[65] *Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform [Session 1932-33], Volume 2C: Minutes of Evidence* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1934), p. 1737, NMML.

[66] For information on the Indian Empire Society, see Bridge, *Holding India*, pp. 48-49 and pp. 99-101. Also see Williamson, Philip, *National Crisis and National Government: British Politics, the Economy and Empire, 1926-1932* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Archival material on the IES is spotty and there are no central archives for the Society. One of the few primary sources for the society is the *Indian Empire Review*, the "official organ of the Indian Empire Society," which was published monthly between 1931 and 1939. The *Review* included articles, speeches at meetings and in parliament, membership rosters, and book reviews.

[67] See Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

[68] See Henry Thomas Thornton, *Colonel Sir Robert Sandeman: His Life and Work on Our Indian Frontier, A Memoir, with Selections from His Correspondence and Official Writings* (London: John Murray, 1895).

Sandeman system to Waziristan. Dealing with the incredibly democratic Mahsuds and Wazirs, Bruce tried to create a system of *maliks*, or tribal headmen, among the tribes. The system never took hold, however, and these *malik*s were unable to exercise control over their tribal sections.[69] C.E. Bruce followed in his father's footsteps and throughout his career continually urged the Government of India to adhere to a Sandeman system in Waziristan.[70]

Bruce's pervasive conviction about the need for the Sandeman system in Waziristan translated into a strong belief in the need for force and a strong British presence on the Frontier. As such, he could not countenance any devolution of British power in India. Bruce's unrelenting support for the Sandemanization of the Frontier made him something of a crank, but he was an influential crank, as witnessed by the IES's decision to have him lead the delegation to the Joint Committee on Indian Reform.[71] Bruce had been one of the few Frontier officers to have anticipated the Red Shirt movement as early as 1929.[72] Like Disraeli, Bruce believed that "in politics experiments mean revolution." But, "experiments, which, in India proper may be merely dangerous, on the frontier are more than likely to lead to disaster, for this has lately been described as

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[69] It is likely that the policy failed because the Government, faced with mounting debts during the period, failed to provide any real financial or military assistance (R.I. Bruce, C.I.E., *The Forward Policy and Its Results or Thirty-Five Years' Work Amongst the Tribes on Our North-Western Frontier of India* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900), p. 325; and Sir Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans, 550B.C.-A.D.1957* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1958), p. 399).

[70] See, for instance, C.E. Bruce, Answers to Tribal Control and Defence (Howell) Committee Questionnaire, 1931, Bruce Papers (IOR) F163/61.

[71] For instance see Colonel C.E. Bruce, C.S.I., C.I.E., C.B.E., O.B.E. (Late AGG Baluchistan), "The Sandeman Policy as Applied to Tribal Problems of To-Day," in the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, 19, 1 (1932), pp. 45-67; Lt.-Colonel C.E. Bruce, *Waziristan, 1936-1937: The Problems of the North-West Frontiers of India and Their Solutions* (Aldershot: Gale and Polden, 1938); and C.E. Bruce, "Speech to the East India Association: The Indian Frontier Problem by Lieut.-Colonel C.E. Bruce, C.S.I., C.I.E., C.B.E.," *The Asiatic Review*, 35 (1939), pp. 492-515. Bruce was extremely doctrinaire in his approach to the "problem of the North-West Frontier" – to the point of making Sandeman's policy into a sort of personal golden calf. He was one of the most gifted Frontier officers of the twentieth century but this ideological rigidity, combined with an inclination towards complaining about his position and pay, seems to have hurt his career. He was one of the few Residents in Waziristan to receive neither a K.C.S.I., nor a K.C.I.E., thus remaining merely "Colonel" rather than "Sir," and his final appointment, as Chief Commissioner in Baluchistan was gazetted as an officiating, rather than permanent, position. He was apparently well thought of by contemporaries, but, as becomes clear in his private correspondence, he got under people's skin as well (see Irwin to Benn, 30 June 1930, Halifax Papers C152/6; and Letter from Sir Philip Chetwode to Bruce, 4 January 1938, Bruce Papers F163/65).

[72] See Chapter Three.

'one of the few places on the earth's surface where we British can take a knockout blow.'"[73] The Frontier was the one area of India where a "firm administration" was most important. The proposed reforms threatened to undermine British authority and expose India to tribal assault and Bolshevik propaganda.

Bruce, who also wrote a number of articles on the Frontier and All-Indian reform for the IES's in-house journal, the *Indian Empire Review*, brought these views to his testimony before Parliament.[74] In a memorandum to the committee he wrote:

> I think it will be admitted that the most vulnerable portion of the great Indian Empire is its north-west frontiers, for these are the very ramparts of the City of India, and if the ramparts fall, the City must fall also. If that be true, then it may equally well be so that on the true solution of the frontier problem in its relationship with India proper, may rest the fate of this great subcontinent.

Bruce queried, however, whether the Frontier had been taken into sufficient consideration. He maintained that Frontier defence had been ignored, and that political considerations were being taken in spite of what Indian control of the Frontier would mean to the security of the people of India. For Bruce the extension of reforms as laid out in the White Paper was simply a version of the close border policy writ large. Just as the tribesmen in the hills saw any sign of weakness as tantamount to a British surrender, so the Congressmen in the plains would view the passing of new constitutional reforms as a massive capitulation, inviting further upheaval and the destruction of Britain's interests in the east. This catastrophe, Bruce warned, would fall most harshly on India's "silent millions" who had labored under ever widening Congress "tyranny" since the introduction of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms in 1919.[75]

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[73] Two Typescript copies of "India's Ramparts" by Lieut.-Colonel C.E. Bruce, CSI, CIE, OBE, Late AGG Baluchistan and sometime Resident in Waziristan, no date, Bruce Papers F163/66.

[74] Lt.-Colonel C.E. Bruce, C.S.I., C.I.E., C.B.E., "Frontier Conditions," in *The Indian Empire Review*, 1 (1932), pp. 24-28; Lt.-Colonel C.E. Bruce, C.S.I., C.I.E., C.B.E., "The Ramparts of the City of India: It's North-West Frontiers, Parts1 & 2," in *The Indian Empire Review*, 4 (1935), pp. 141-148, and pp. 186-192; and Lt.-Colonel C.E. Bruce, C.S.I., C.I.E., C.B.E., "The Mohmands, Parts 1 & 2," in *The Indian Empire Review*, 5 (1936), pp. 16-26, and pp. 53-62. Similar arguments about the peril of All-Indian reforms on the Frontier were being made by another former Resident in Waziristan, Sir William Barton in the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* at this time. See Barton, "The Problems of Law and Order Under a Responsible Government in the North-West Frontier Province."

[75] Lt.-Colonel C.E. Bruce, C.S.I.. C.I.E., C.B.E., "Memorandum" in *Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform [Session 1932-33], Volume 2C: Minutes of Evidence* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1934), pp. 1688-1696.

The former Frontier officer wrapped up his memorandum with the ominous warning that the tribesmen on the Frontier were waiting and watching, as they had always done, for the slightest signs of weakness on the part of the authorities. As another political officer, whom Bruce quoted, had observed about Arabia:

> Let the central authority for whatever cause become weak and the fringe celebrates it with an orgy of self will, for the tribesman, with his rifle at his side, is governable only so long as he is convinced of his rulers power and will to govern, as well as that rulers desire for his welfare.[76]

Bruce faced a skeptical audience of Lords and MPs, many of whom, like the once and future Viceroys, Lords Irwin and Linlithgow, were decidedly in favor of reforms on the subcontinent. Under questioning, neither Bruce nor his colleagues, such as MacMunn, performed well. Bruce admitted that although he was charged with addressing the All-Indian ramifications of adoption of the White Paper, the Frontier was the only element he truly knew.[77] On numerous questions, his first response was to ask "On the Frontier?" Even when it came to the Frontier, however, Bruce's reasoning, premised on the theory that the 1919 reforms had led to chaos, ran into trouble. Earl Winterton, whom Bruce had escorted throughout the Frontier in 1927, asked him if he was happy with the present state of tribal relations in Waziristan and elsewhere. Bruce replied in the affirmative. But, Winterton countered, this happy state of affairs was taking place since the 1919 reforms. Beaten, Bruce could only reply that his inquisitor was correct.[78]

Ultimately the IES witnesses turned in a poor performance before a committee that had little patience for many of their arguments.[79] The faulty logic of many of their claims and the wholly unrealistic goal of turning back the clock on Montagu-Chelmsford doomed their enterprise. Churchill, Bruce, and other diehards on India went down to

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[76] Bruce Memorandum in *Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform*, p. 1696. Bruce was quoting the Political Officer Bertram Thomas in Thomas's *Alarms and Excursions in Arabia* (London: Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1931), p. 216.

[77] *Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform [Session 1932-33], Volume 2C: Minutes of Evidence*, p. 1705.

[78] *Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform [Session 1932-33], Volume 2C: Minutes of Evidence*, pp. 1713-1714.

[79] For a discussion of the makeup of the Joint Committee and the different members' views on Indian reform see Bridge, *Holding India*, p. 97. See also Arthur Berriedale Keith, *A Constitutional History of India, 1600-1935* (London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1936), p. 308.

defeat, and the Joint Committee signed their report in favor of the White Paper in October 1934.[80] In the course of coming to their conclusions, however, the Joint Committee also heard from other diehard voices, and some of these enjoyed far greater success in their testimony.

Among these other witnesses was Field Marshal Sir Claud Jacob, onetime Commander-in-Chief in India, and former Military Secretary to the India Office. Born in India and a veteran of many Frontier wars, Jacob was a reactionary of the first order who served on the executive committee of the IES. Both physically and in attitude, Jacob bore a striking resemblance to Low's "Colonel Blimp." It was Jacob who had informed the Simon Commission in 1929 that the moment an Indian learned to read he became "effeminate."[81] He was the sort of Englishman who saw the storm of another Indian Mutiny gathering on every horizon, and believed that Indian reform meant that the British had lost faith in themselves, which would have catastrophic implications on the Frontier, where the tribes would "lose faith" in the British as well.[82] Although the unorthodox Commander-in-Chief in India, Sir Philip Chetwode, thought Jacob talked "a great deal of nonsense," Hoare invited the Field Marshal to give the sole expert testimony on the defence of India before the Joint Parliamentary Committee.[83]

During his in camera testimony in February 1934, Jacob railed against the Indianization of the armed forces, stating that the Indian Army was incapable of producing Indian leaders.[84] One of his reasons for this supposed incapability was striking

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[80] *Report and Proceedings of the Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform* [Session 1933-34] (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1934), NMML.

[81] Field Marshal Sir Claud Jacob, Testimony to the Indian Statutory Commission, 20 June 1929, Simon Papers F77/56.

[82] See Forward by Sir Michael O'Dwyer and Sir Claud Jacob to Bruce, *Waziristan 1936-1937*, p. v. Jacob opposed any suggestion that Indian Army units be allowed to possess artillery. In 1929 he wrote that despite the calls by Indian politicians to "Indianize" field artillery, "since the Indian Mutiny it has been our rigid rule never to allow natives of a country which we occupy to be armed with all the latest modern weapons, such as mentioned above. The Indian Mutiny is surely an example for all time of the dire results of allowing native troops to be armed with exactly the same weapons as British troops" (Note by Field Marshal Sir Claud Jacob, 26 November 1929, L PO 4/17).

[83] Letter from Sir Philip Chetwode to Sir Findlater Stewart (Permanent Undersecretary of State for India), 7 September 1933, Permanent Under-Secretaries of State for India Papers (IOR) D714/17.

[84] Memorandum by S. K. Brown (Military Secretary to the India Office) on Testimony of Sir Claud Jacob, February 1934, (IOR) L MIL 5/886.

in view of his earlier testimony to the Simon Commission about Indians and the ability to read. He argued that "they [Indians] are so illiterate that they cannot study the art of war."[85] Jacob was sufficiently opposed to the future as well. He claimed that the proposed reforms could lead to an armed Muslim combination against the new "Hindu Raj" at the center. The Muslims could no longer be trusted. His primary evidence for all these predictions were the events that had taken place on the North-West Frontier since 1930, including the fraternization between villagers and Afridi *lashkars*. Under questioning, however, Jacob had to acquiesce, admitting that a Muslim confederation constituting a serious threat to India from the North West could only arise if the administration of India "failed signally" in the duties imposed on it by the new constitution.[86] Jacob did make good headway when it came to another aspect of his testimony: the external threats to India and the need to maintain firm British control over the Indian Army. The Field Marshal asserted that Afghanistan was very likely to disintegrate at any moment and that a war with a Soviet allied Afghanistan was also a distinct possibility.[87] No matter what, the new constitution would have to reserve defence for the Crown. Neither Hoare nor other members of the Joint Committee challenged these conclusions.[88] The fact of the matter was that Hoare and the Conservative dominated British Cabinet were willing to insist on the reservation of defence, because they, like some leftist critics such as George Orwell, knew that the Indian Army was "the ultimate instrument of control" in India and therefore needed to remain "completely in [British] hands."[89] For the British, the key to this argument was neither internal "aid to civil" nor the use of Indian forces overseas, both of which could be quickly torn apart by Indian politicians of all stripes, but Frontier defence. On this key point Jacob was preaching to the choir.

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[85] Notes by Sir Samuel Hoare on Testimony by Sir Claud Jacob.

[86] Memorandum by S. K. Brown on Testimony of Sir Claud Jacob.

[87] Maconachie in Kabul and the Foreign Office in London shared the fear that constitutional changes in India would somehow destabilize the Afghan regime (see Draft Telegram from Sir John Simon (Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) to Sir Richard Maconachie, 31 May 1934, L P&S 12/3155.

[88] Notes by Sir Samuel Hoare on Testimony by Sir Claud Jacob.

[89] Memorandum on Conservative Policy at the Round Table Conference by Sir Samuel Hoare, December 1930, Templewood Papers E240/52; George Orwell, *Burmese Days* (New York: Harvest Books, 1962), p. 69.

What is interesting, however, is that like Willingdon, Hoare seriously doubted whether the Afghan/Soviet threat was still a genuine menace to Afghanistan or the Indian Empire. Nor was Afghanistan likely to turn on India. He told Sir Findlater Stewart, the India Office's Permanent Undersecretary of State, the he could "never understand why the land forces on the frontier should be greater today [1932] than they were in 1914." Soviet Russia was "much weaker militarily than Imperial Russia." Moreover, there was a friendly regime in Afghanistan.[90] In late 1934, as the Government of India Bill was winding its way through parliament, Hoare assured his Cabinet colleagues that:

> The policy of the Afghan Government continues to be one of sincere friendship and cooperation with His Majesty's Government, and it is clear that there is no present danger of their adopting a pro-Russian policy or entering into any unwise commitment to Russia as a result of Soviet threats or cajolery.[91]

Thus the Secretary of State, like Willingdon, who lamented that he could convince neither soldiers nor political officers that the international situation had changed in the last 20 years, believed that the various threats to India's North-West Frontier had substantially decreased.[92] It seemed that even the tribal threat was receding due to the continued application of the forward policy in Waziristan.[93]

Yet the protection of the Frontier still lay at the center of Britain's rationale for maintaining "reserved powers" over India's defence. In the Government of India's memorandum on the reservation of defence and reforms in India, prepared for use in the White Paper, Willingdon and his council argued that previous discussions had focused far too much on the "abstract constitutional aspect" of defence and not taken into account the specific peculiar conditions of the defence of India. These, the Government of India

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[90] Note by Sir Samuel Hoare to Sir Findlater Stewart, 25 January 1932, (IOR) L P&S 12/3143. Sir John Simon, who was then serving as Foreign Secretary in London agreed with this analysis. Simon wrote to Maconachie, informing him that the Soviet Union was impoverished, weak, and far more concerned about their far eastern frontiers with Japan and China than with fomenting revolution in Afghanistan and India (see Sir John Simon to Sir Richard Maconachie (with enclosed Memorandum on Conditions in the U.S.S.R.), 17 October 1932, L PO 5/23).

[91] Cabinet Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India on Afghanistan, 30 November 1934, (IOR) L P&S 12/1683. See also Cabinet Memorandum by the Secretary of State for India on Afghanistan, March 1934, L P&S 12/3155.

[92] Willingdon to Hoare, 26 June 1933.

[93] Note by Sir Samuel Hoare to Sir Findlater Stewart, 25 January 1932. See Chapter One for description of the forward policy in Waziristan.

claimed, were found on the Frontier: "the lack of any direct control over our Frontier tribes, of their affinity" for Afghanistan, and the influence of "subversive organizations." War was a constant threat on the Frontier, and had to be dealt with by a strong British executive.[94] Despite the fact that the Viceroy and others had doubts about the real threat posed by the Frontier, the majority of officials in India still sincerely believed that the local and international dimensions of the Frontier problem dictated that the British maintain a strong grip on India's defence policies.[95] These opinions, when combined with Britain's long-term strategic concerns East of Suez, meant that when the Government of India Bill was granted the Royal Assent on August 2nd, 1935, defence remained firmly in British hands.[96]

CONCLUSION

Concerns about the Frontier remained crucial to the British retention of the defence portfolio throughout the rest of the 1930s. Chetwode, the Indian Commander-in-Chief, grew increasingly concerned towards the end of his tenure that Indians would, at some point in the future, have control of their own defence establishment. In a secret memorandum to Willingdon, he wrote:

> England cannot afford to let her only land frontier be in any danger whatever of invasion, nor can she afford to see India threatened with chaos for want of an Army and Air Force she can rely on.

These were both imperial necessities and should remain imperial responsibilities. Chetwode continued:

> I suggest that England should declare, when the right time comes and the ground has been carefully prepared, that the 600 miles of frontier from the Malakand to Quetta are an imperial responsibility, and that she will hold this frontier with covering troops…constituted as they are now, and not Indianized.

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[94] Government of India Despatch on the Reservation of Defence, 11 July 1932, L MIL 5/886.

[95] For instance, Griffith, in the NWFP, reported in 1934 (after his propaganda campaign had been shuttered) that there was a Soviet "cell" in Chamarkand. Yet even Griffith was increasingly coming to the conclusion that the "tribal problem" on the frontier was simply a tribal problem, rather than an outgrowth of Soviet influences (See Sir Ralph Griffith to Olaf Caroe (Deputy Foreign Secretary, Government of India), 26 July 1934, L P&S 12/3186).

[96] *A Bill (As Amended in Committee) to Make Further Provision for the Government of India* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1935).

The Commander-in-Chief was suggesting the old strategy of delinking the Frontier from an increasingly political and democratic India, run not by martial races or "the ruling or upper classes" of Indians, but by the India's middle classes who, Chetwode argued, were woefully underprepared.[97]

An upshot of this emphasis on the Frontier in this period was the blinding of the Indian Army to other possible threats: namely the Japanese Empire. Writing in 1936, Lord Linlithgow, the combative peer who had replaced Willingdon as Viceroy, complained that it would not be easy for him to "persuade the soldiers here who have been scanning the North-West Frontier for signs of Russians for so many generations to turn and face S[outh] E[ast]."[98] Although the Indian General Staff did begin discussing the problems of India's Eastern frontiers, most of their attention remained on the North-West Frontier.[99] London assisted in supporting this approach. Both the Subcommittee (Pownall Subcommittee) charged with examining India's defences and the wider Expert Committee on the Defence of India (Chatfield Committee), which assessed India's military situation in the months before the Second World War, hewed to the line that the Soviet Union was a major threat; that the Afghan regime could change its spots and turn on the British at any moment; and that the North-West Frontier remained the preeminent menace to India's security.[100] This willful disregard for India's eastern Frontiers meant that that the Indian General Staff developed a defence plan for that region only in the summer of 1940.[101]

By the end of the decade, the British still maintained that Indian politicians failed to understand the nature of India's defence problems – most notably the problem of the

[97] Secret Note by His Excellency the Commander in Chief on the Future Defence of India, 23 October 1935, (IOR) L PO 4/13. Chetwode's suggestion came to naught, and was seen as totally impractical for future Commanders-in-Chief such as Auchinleck. But the argument that the creation of Pakistan was somehow the natural outgrowth of Britain's perfervid strategic thinking about the Frontier continues to be made. See, for instance, Narendra Singh Sarila, *The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold Story of India's Partition* (London: Constable and Robinson, 2006).

[98] Viceroy (Linlithgow) to Secretary of State for India (Marquess of Zetland), 26 April 1936, Linlithgow Papers (IOR) F125/3.

[99] See General Staff (India) Memorandum on Japanese Aggression Against India, September 1936, (TNA) WO 106/158.

[100] See Report of the Pownall Sub-Committee and Report of the Chatfield Committee.

[101] See Defence of India Plan, 1941, (IOR) L WS 1/530.

Frontier. The Report of the Expert Committee on the Defence of India, chaired by Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield, who was assisted by the future Indian Commander-in-Chief, Claude Auchinleck, followed this pattern, heaping scorn upon the nationalists. It stated that "the Party" as it mischievously called Congress, showed "either a striking ignorance of the true facts of the position, or a refusal to admit them." Nationalists, and especially the "Hindus" that the Chatfield Committee suggested made up the entire Congress party, "would find ample opportunity for undermining the constitutional position [of the British] as regards defence."[102] The 1930s saw the Congress party take the levers of power in provincial governments the width and breadth of the subcontinent, including the NWFP, but at the end of the decade the British still maintained that Indian nationalists failed to understand India's defence problems and could not be trusted.

For the British, both in London and in India, the key to India's security in the 1930s still lay on the North-West Frontier. Russia, Afghanistan, and the trans-border tribes continued to be seen as a fundamental menace to the Indian Empire. This had been orthodoxy in 1930, and it remained the basic assumption in 1939. But in 1930 the Frontier was still a land apart, cut off from the rest of India, and rarely brought up in discussions over India's constitutional future. With the rise of Frontier nationalism in the early 1930s this purdah had been lifted. The NWFP was a now an All-India issue. The British had used the security of the Frontier as a fundamental argument against Indian control of the armed forces and defence policy. The sword cut both ways, however, and during the course of the 1930s the British military regime on the Frontier, and especially their policies in the unadministered tribal tracts became a major component in the Congress's efforts to dislodge the British Raj.

[102] Report of the Chatfield Committee.

CHAPTER SEVEN:
TRIBAL POLICY AND ITS DISCONTENTS, 1930-1939

In the aftermath of Frontier uprising of 1930, British policies in the settled districts of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) became a source of heated debate in both India and Britain. Indian nationalists and their allies lambasted the Government of India's use of excessive force in the settled districts of the Frontier, arguing that this illustrated the fundamental violence that underwrote Britain's Indian Empire. This criticism, combined with the magnitude of the nationalist movement on the Frontier, convinced the British administration of the need to extend reforms to the NWFP, which brought the administered districts into the All-Indian political sphere. No longer a "forbidden land," as one nationalist critic called it, cut off from the rest of India, the Frontier assumed a key role in the constitutional wrangling of the 1930s.[1]

In this process the settled districts of the Frontier received a number of All-Indian reforms. The British, however, intended to keep one area of the Frontier completely outside the All-Indian purview: the tribal agencies. Located outside of "British India," the tribal agencies remained the dominion of the Indian Political Service and the Indian Army, controlled by the Governor of the NWFP in his capacity as Agent to the Governor-General (Viceroy). Situated between the administered districts of the NWFP and the Durand Line, which delineated the international border of Afghanistan, the Raj neither taxed nor administered the tribal agencies. The British presence comprised the Army, Royal Air Force (RAF), and political agents, who were charged with following specific procedures in specific agencies. These procedures ranged from a "close border" policy of non-interference in the Malakand, to the modified "forward" policy premised on military occupation and road construction, in Waziristan. All these policies, even relatively recent

[1] Allah Bukhsh Yusufi, *The Frontier Tragedy: An Account of the Inhuman Acts of Repression and Terrorism, Blockades, Loot, Incendiarism & Massacres – Through Which the People of the North-West Frontier Province Have Had to Go During the Present Disturbance* (Peshawar: All India Khilafat Committee, 1930), p. 10. See also Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam, and Nationalism: Muslim Politics in the North-West Frontier Movement, 1937-47* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 60-61.

ones such as that in Waziristan (1919-1922), were hammered out by the British alone, with no input from Indians.[2]

Regardless of specific policy, British management of the tribal areas rested implicitly on a liberal use of force. Soldiers and political officers operated on the assumption that the Pathan tribes were violent fanatics. Therefore the only way to "handle them" was with the sword arm of empire. The numerous tribal incursions into the settled districts of the NWFP and the Punjab to raid or kidnap, were met with punitive force in the form of an armed column that marched on villages, killed all the livestock, burned the village to the ground and demanded payment as restitution.[3] This policy of "butcher and bolt," as the scholar and critic of Frontier policy C.C. Davies called it, had characterized the British stance towards the Frontier tribes since the 1860s.[4] By the 1920s, these methods were often superseded by an all-out assault on "recalcitrant" villages by the RAF, which often lead to even greater destruction. This was the hallmark of what the British euphemistically referred to as "peaceful penetration" in the tribal areas during the interwar period.

This chapter examines British Frontier policy in the 1920s and 1930s, an era in which the Government of India faced an increasing number of constraints on its freedom of action. By the 1930s the landscape in which the British operated had changed radically from the Victorian and Edwardian political vacuums in which Frontier policy had once been conducted. "Political India" had awakened and was beginning to take an active interest in British actions on the Frontier in general and in the tribal areas in particular.

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[2] For the formulation of Waziristan's "modified forward policy" in the wake of the Third Anglo-Afghan War (1919) see Chapter One.

[3] As a young officer on the Frontier, the future Governor of the NWFP, Sir George Cunningham, described a typical assault on a Mahsud village as follows: "We have had no special excitements lately and it looks as if the Mahsuds were coming in to ask for a peaceful life. Yesterday I was out helping to destroy a village about 2 miles from here; it is great fun piling up straw and brushwood inside a gentleman's dining room, pricking a hole in the roof to produce a draught, and then setting light to it with the help of a tine of paraffin. We did a lot like that, also blew down a tower, destroyed a water irrigation channel, and "ringed" their trees – just as if we were Huns…" (George Cunningham to his Sister, 9 February 1923, Cunningham Papers, India Office Records (IOR), D670/38). For descriptions from the interwar era see also John Masters, *Bugles and a Tiger: A Volume of Autobiography* (New York: Viking Press, 1956); and John Prendergast, *Prender's Progress: A Soldier in India, 1931-47* (London: Cassell, 1979).

[4] C.C. Davies, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier 1890-1908: With a Survey of Policy since 1849* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), p. 27.

Many nationalists believed that the violent regime that predominated in the tribal agencies not only contributed to Britain's retention of control over India's defences, but was "the only excuse for piling up armaments at the expense of the poor people of this country."[5] Moreover, the Indian, British and international press took a strong interest in British policies on the Frontier, especially the bombing campaigns against the tribesmen, which scandalized liberal opinion in Britain and the United States and was used by Hitler and Mussolini as an example of British hypocrisy. Finally this chapter examines the gradual acknowledgement of this new "constraint" upon the British administration's ability to construct and implement policy in India.[6] It argues that by the end of the decade many within the Government of India, including the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, agreed with the Governor of the NWFP, Sir George Cunningham, who observed in 1939: "Indian public opinion must gradually have more and more of a say in Frontier policy."[7]

INTERWAR TRIBAL POLICY

One of the principal reasons behind Lord Curzon's decision to sever the North-West Frontier from the Punjab in 1901 was to give the central Government a direct hand in the formulation and administration of Frontier policy. Since the Afghan frontier was the most important land frontier in the British Empire, its administration was considered too vital to be entrusted to a mere provincial governor. With the establishment of the NWFP, both the Government of India and the India Office in London took a leading role in the formulation of Frontier policy. Heavily influenced by the military, the new regime developed different approaches to each of the tribal agencies.

In the far north of the province, Chitral and the valleys of Swat and Dir were ruled by reliable autocrats, the Mehtar of Chitral, the Wali of Swat and the Nawab of Dir, over

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[5] *Indian Central Legislative Assembly Debates*, 4 September 1935, pp. 392-393.

[6] See Judith M. Brown, "Imperial Façade: Some Constraints Upon and Contradictions in the British Position in India, 1919-35," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 26, 5 (1976), pp. 35-52; and Anirudh Deshpande, *British Military Policy in India, 1900-1945: Colonial Constraints and Declining Power* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2005).

[7] Confidential Note on Frontier Policy for His Excellency the Viceroy by Sir George Cunningham (Governor, NWFP), 20 June 1939, (IOR) L P&S 12/3171.

whom the British could exercise "informal rule" as they did in the Indian princely states. Further south, in the Malakand tribal agency, the epicenter of the 1897-98 revolt, the guiding principle behind British policy was a strict adherence to "non-interference." There was a political agent and tribal levies but no regular troops. The Mohmand country that lay to the west of the Malakand featured a similar formula.[8] Further south, the Khyber Agency included elements of both the "close border" and the "forward" schools. The areas immediately around the Khyber Pass was patrolled by regular troops who resided in the fort at Landi Kotal, but away from the roads the agency's Afridi tribesmen retained, for all intents and purposes, complete independence in their affairs. In the Kurram agency, nestled along the Afghan frontier, the British adhered to a close border policy of non-interference. The Army could only enter when invited by the local Political Agent.[9] With the exception of the Mohmand country, where a forward policy was initiated in the early 1930s, these policies, laid down by Curzon and the Indian Foreign and Political Department at the beginning of the twentieth century, changed little in the subsequent decades.[10]

At the end of First World, the two southern-most agencies, Tochi and Wana, which together comprised Waziristan, had operated on a "close border" policy since 1901. This featured tribal levies, large allowances to local headmen, or *maliks* – a leftover from R.I. Bruce's attempts to introduce the Sandeman system in the 1890s – and minimal outside interference.[11] The collapse of this system in the Third Anglo-Afghan War of 1919 led to the vicious bureaucratic battle between those who – for both financial and ideological reasons – believed in sealing off the region from the rest of the Frontier, and those who believed the answer lay in military occupation.[12] In the end, the final decision was made not by the men on the spot, or even the Government of India, but by

[8] For British views on the Mohmands roughly analogous to E.B. Howell's *Mizh* see W.R.H. Merk, *Report on the Mohmands* (Lahore: Punjab Government Civil Secretariat Press, 1882).

[9] General Staff Memorandum on North-West Frontier Policy, 1 November 1920, India Office Records (IOR) L PO 4/4.

[10] Minute by His Excellency General Sir Robert Cassels, K.C.B., C.S.I., D.S.O., ADC, Acting Commander-in-Chief in India, 2 June 1933, (IOR) L P&S 12/3143.

[11] See R.I. Bruce, C.I.E., *The Forward Policy and Its Results or Thirty-Five Years' Work Amongst the Tribes on Our North-Western Frontier of India* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1900).

[12] See Chapter One.

London, which insisted on a "modified forward policy" of military occupation, road building and continued allowances. The "forward policy" in Waziristan rested entirely on the presence of a large cantonment of British and Indian troops, placed at Razmak and later also at Wana. Yet, although policy in Waziristan was explicitly geared towards a military solution, the Army and the RAF were major components of tribal management in *all* the tribal areas.[13] The British responded to any tribal incursions or signs of unrest with a column of troops or aerial bombardment. More so than anywhere else in the Indian Empire, the British regime in the tribal belt was based on naked force.

The 1920s opened with full scale revolts in two areas of the Frontier: the Khyber Agency and Waziristan. By 1922, however, both of these uprisings had been defeated and the rest of the decade was characterized by an unusual level of peace and stability throughout the Frontier. Tranquility was relative, however, and the 1920s were still punctuated by a number of "incidents." The year 1923 witnessed the notorious "Molly Ellis Case" in which an outlaw band of Afridis from the Tirah attacked the home of a British officer in Kohat, murdered his wife, and abducted his 18-year-old daughter, Molly, whom they held for ransom. Miss Ellis was eventually rescued and the perpetrator's village burned to the ground, but this "outrage" coincided with a number of other, less sensational, attacks on European women in the NWFP, leading to an outcry in the British press about the Government's inability to protect British subjects.[14] Despite

[13] Although there were five agencies – Malakand, Khyber, Kurram, Tochi and Wana (Waziristan) – there were other tribal areas of the Frontier that were neither a tribal agency nor part of the administered districts. Areas such as the Tirah and the Mohmand country were instead overseen by the Deputy Commissioner of the neighboring administered district, who acted as political agent. Thus, the Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar also functioned as political agent for the Mohmand country situated to the north of the Khyber Pass, and the Deputy Commissioner of Kohat was responsible for large tracts of the adjoining Tirah.

[14] Deputy Commissioner, Kohat to Chief Commissioner, Peshawar, 19 April 1923, (IOR) L P&S 10/1062. This kidnapping acquired legendary status, and is included in every popular history of the Frontier. It is interesting to note that Lahore's *Civil & Military Gazette*, the preeminent Anglo-Indian newspaper in North-West India, carried an article stating that Miss Ellis had wed Major E.W.N. Wade of the East Yorkshire Regiment in May 1930. This was the same issue of the paper that carried the news of Sir Norman Bolton's collapse during the Peshawar "disturbances" ("Miss Molly Ellis Weds," *Civil &Military Gazette*, 4 May 1930, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML)). See "Murdered White Women; Indian Frontier Raids by Native Gangs; Mother's Protest," in *The Daily Express*, 13 December 1923, (IOR) L P&S 10/1064.

these problems, the fact remained that there were few major tribal conflagrations in the 1920s.[15]

The only substantial upheaval centered on the Mohmand country situated to the north west of the Peshawar District in 1927. After a dispute over tribal allowances a local Mullah known as the Faqir of Alingar, declared a jihad and attack the Shabqadar fort, which stood directly in the path to Peshawar.[16] The administration acted quickly to stop Alingar's *lashkar* of 600 men. The local RAF aircraft were scrambled and sent to bomb the *lashkar* and enforce an aerial blockade against the participating villages. This had an immediate effect, and the Faqir's revolt, which had the potential to cause great damage in the settled areas, was quickly ended by this new and increasingly common instrument of control on the Frontier: aerial bombing.[17]

The British first used aeroplanes on the Frontier during the Anglo-Afghan War in 1919, when RAF aircraft dropped bombs on Jalalabad and Kabul. Aircraft were utilized in concert with troop movements throughout the Waziristan campaign, and the military gave glowing reviews of the effect of aerial bombardment against the tribes. The Commander-in-Chief, Lord Rawlinson, claimed that it was "impossible to overestimate the value of aircraft" when used tactically with ground troops. These sentiments were echoed by the air staff in India, who were keen to maintain the RAF as a separate service and take on additional responsibilities.[18] From the beginning, the RAF insisted that "air control" was superior to military columns. Bombing, they argued, produced less collateral damage and fewer fatalities to ground troops. Moreover, in light of the Government of India's admitted desire to "advance civilization" up to the Durand Line, the mere threat of bombing encouraged the surrender of recalcitrant tribes, thus sparing

[15] Sir William Barton, *India's North-West Frontier* (London: John Murray, 1939), p. 87.

[16] For more detail on the 1927 Mohmand blockade see Sana Haroon's excellent study of Frontier religious leadership in the twentieth century, *Frontier of Faith: Islam in the Indo-Afghan Borderland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 138-144.

[17] Notes on the Main Modern Military and Air Operations of the North-West Frontier of India, 1897-1929, in Memorandum by Air Staff on What Air Control Means in War and Peace and What it Has Achieved, for the Defence of India Sub-Committee (Enquiry into the Extended Use of Air Power), Committee of Imperial Defence, July 1930, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA) CAB 16/87.

[18] On the RAF in this period see David Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force, 1919-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990).

both the tribesmen and the British unnecessary costs in men and treasure.[19] This, the air men argued, was the way of the future.

Not all officials in India believed that aerial bombardment of the tribes was the best way to carry out "tribal control," however. Within the Army and the Frontier service there was a strong fear that the possible death and maiming of men, women and children during aerial bombardment would lead to legitimate tribal grievances and growing tensions on the Frontier. In London, the Secretary of State for India, Lord Peel, was also concerned, informing the then Viceroy, Lord Reading, in 1923 that they worried that the recent abduction of Molly Ellis and other "outrages" were connected to aerial bombing:

> One theory to which publicity has been given, and for which the authority of local knowledge is claimed, is that the frequent use of aeroplanes for what amounts to police rather than military work, and the resultant indiscriminate bombing of men women and children in tribal country, is responsible for the adoption by the tribesmen of what is in their eyes a policy of retaliation.

Peel told Reading that he assumed that "opinions differ widely as to the general effect on the mentality of the tribesmen of the North-West Frontier of the use of aeroplanes, and the inevitably indiscriminate results of bombing operations from the air." Peel requested that the question be given "serious and careful examination."[20]

Reading looked into this question and replied to Peel's query – *two years later* – after Peel had been succeeded by Lord Birkenhead. The Viceroy rejected the notion that aerial bombardment was either inhumane or that it contributed to undue amounts of resentment among the Frontier population:

> There is no doubt of the potency of the fear of becoming subject to air operations. Of this there was striking proof during the recent operations [in Waziristan], when the rifles stolen from the Gumal police station were surrendered by tribesmen from fear of being subjected to the same punishment from the air as their…neighbors.

The fear of being bombed was sometimes enough, but when actual aerial bombardment occurred, Reading allowed that there was, of course an initial shock among the victims. Yet:

> Our evidence goes to show that it is not the way force is applied but its effectiveness that is feared, and to that extent resented. Once force is actually applied, the tribesmen

[19] Notes on the Main Modern Military and Air Operations of the North-West Frontier of India, 1897-1929.

[20] Extract from Secret Despatch No. 3 to Government of India, 9 August 1923, L P&S 10/1064.

> probably dislike land and air operations equally, except that in the latter his prized inaccessibility is taken from him and his opportunities for hitting back are far more limited.

Lastly, neither the Viceroy nor his council believed that there was any serious danger of the Frontier administration acquiring a reputation for "barbarism." Due to the specific warnings given prior to aerial assault and the fact that these operations were under the control of the Political Department and the Army, rather than the RAF, bombardment was in no way "inhumane." Strikingly, the Viceroy did not expect any genuine public "criticism," either in India or Britain, of air operations on the Frontier.[21]

Aerial operations were also cheap. Air control possessed the "near-miraculous property of lengthening the arm of government whilst shortening its purse."[22] This was something the Government of India was in desperate need of in the 1920s. Although the Government was committed to a policy of a gradual "penetration, control, and civilization" of the trans-border tribes, the massive deficits that faced Delhi in the wake of the First World War continued throughout the next decade.[23] The parlous state of India's finances dictated that this seemingly effective new technology be used as much as possible.

Aerial bombardment also fit into the British view of what sort of policies showed results among the tribesmen in this period. While the first two decades of the twentieth century were dominated by Curzon's general policy of minimal intervention in the tribal belt, both the Political Service and the Indian Army believed that the level of tribal unrest in the 1919-22 period proved that this approach had failed. They entered the 1920s convinced that the real answer to the "problem of the North-West Frontier" lay in an aggressive extension of British "civilization" all the way up to the Durand Line. An

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[21] Government of Indian Secret Despatch No 11 of 1925 on the Principles to be Adopted in Flying on the Frontier, 15 October, 1925, CAB 16/87.

[22] Charles Townshend, "Civilization and 'Frightfulness': Air Control in the Middle East between the Wars", in Chris Wrigley (ed.), *Warfare Diplomacy and Politics: Essays in Honour of A.J.P. Taylor* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1986), p 143.

[23] Note by His Excellency Sir Ralph Griffith, K.C.S.I., C.I.E., Governor of the North-West Frontier Province, 28 June 1933, L P&S 12/3143. For the Government of India's financial crisis in the interwar period see B.R. Tomlinson, *The Political Economy of the Raj, 1914-1947: The Economics of Decolonization in India* (London: Macmillan, 1979).

important corollary to this assumption was that the best way to realize this policy was by liberal use of armed force and, when possible, actual military occupation.

For most officials, Waziristan constituted the primary example of efficient military occupation. Although the initial "forward policy" urged by the Army in the heat of the Waziristan revolt of 1919-22 emphasized the role that economic development could play in a genuine pacification of the tribes, the impoverished Indian exchequer contributed very little towards economic infrastructure in the coming decade.[24] Despite this, the British continued to give lip service to economic development through the mid-1920s. Speaking to the Central Legislative Assembly in 1923, the Indian Foreign Secretary, Sir Denys Bray, stated that the root of the tribal problem lay in the poverty of the region, where the inhabitants "breed more than they can feed."[25] Yet little to no funds were released for this purpose.[26] Instead, the large sums of money that the Government of India did invest in Waziristan went into road building and the tools of military occupation.

The Government of India's emphasis on military expenditure grew out of the widely held conviction that British policy in Waziristan had succeeded and that this success was due to Britain's military occupation. The former Resident, Sir Ralph Griffith, stated that old men in Waziristan told him that "never within living memory have they known such peace and security" and attempts in the late 1920s to reduce the number of troops garrisoned in the region were successfully resisted by the Frontier administration.[27] In fighting this possible reduction, Evelyn Howell, and later C.E. Bruce, in their successive capacities as Resident in Waziristan, predicted catastrophe and argued that although the RAF could take over some of the army's duties, they would have to act

[24] Report of Committee Appointed by the Governor-General in Council to Examine the Military Requirements of India, 1921, Hailey Papers (IOR) E220/3c.

[25] See Alan Warren, *Waziristan, the Faqir of Ipi, and the Indian Army: The North West Frontier Revolt of 1936-37* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 59.

[26] See Notes of a Conversation between Sir Horatio (Norman) Bolton and Lord Winterton (Under Secretary of State for India) at Peshawar, 22 January 1927, (IOR) L PO 5/24A.

[27] Note by His Excellency Sir Ralph Griffith, 28 June 1933.

"ruthlessly."[28] Victory assured, the road system on which the army moved was extended in 1927 and a major cantonment – on the Razmak model – was established at Wana in the late 1920s.[29] By the early 1930s, the Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, argued that the military presence was the great stabilizing factor in Waziristan.[30] It should in no way be altered.[31]

By the late 1920s the idea of economic development as a necessary component of tribal stability had largely disappeared. The British believed that road construction employed enough tribesmen to ensure a sufficient and constant income, and Frontier officers insisted that the standard of living was rising among the Mahsuds and the Wazirs. This, they argued, was due to their own enterprise rather than government largess.[32] Not everyone bought this. Lord Irwin, for one, believed that the chances of government sponsored economic development in Waziristan were slim and that the true economic salvation of the tribes lay in outmigration.[33] Interestingly, few admitted that the relative tranquility that prevailed in the region might be related to the fact that the Government was disbursing huge allowances to the tribes. Tribal allowances, which stood at Rs. 1·3 crore (£8,666) per year in 1919 were more than doubled to Rs. 2·8 crore (£18,700) by 1925.[34]

CRITICISMS OF TRIBAL POLICY, 1930-1939

Since the inception of British rule on the Frontier, the formulation of tribal policy had remained firmly in official hands. It engendered long and passionate debates, but the

[28] Memorandum from the Resident in Waziristan (E.B. Howell), to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, NWFP, 5 September 1924, (IOR) L P&S 12/3151; and Confidential Memorandum for the Resident in Waziristan (C.E. Bruce) to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, NWFP, 4 January 1928, L P&S 12/3151.

[29] Confidential Memorandum from Sir Norman Bolton (Chief Commissioner, NWFP) on Future Policy in Waziristan, 8 June 1927, L P&S 12/3151.

[30] Government of India Secret Despatch No. 3 of 1934 on the Future Location of Troops in Waziristan, 12 July 1934, L P&S 12/3151.

[31] See Memorandum by Lieut.-Col. C.E. Bruce, C.I.E. on Policy in Waziristan, 23 January 1929, L P&S 12/3151.

[32] Notes on a Conversation between Sir Norman Bolton and Lord Winterton, 22 January 1927.

[33] Extract from Private Letter from Lord Irwin (Viceroy) to Lord Birkenhead (Secretary of State for India), 19 May 1927, (IOR) L PO 5/23.

[34] Warren, *Waziristan*, p. 56.

participants were uniformly British and official. The events of April 1930 and the British response in the following months knelled the death of this cozy arrangement, however. The Frontier was now firmly in the crosshairs of Indian nationalists, who publicized British "excesses" against the Red Shirts in the settled districts and the brutal nature of operations in the tribal areas as evidence of the violence that, they argued, stood at the core of British imperialism. The scope and size of the nationalist movement in the administered districts dictated that the British make a number of concessions. This the British did; introducing reforms in 1932 and including the administered areas in the provincial reforms of the Government of India Act, 1935. The British, however, resisted the notion that there could be compromise with "political India" in the unadministered territory. Tribal policy thus became a key point of contention between the nationalists and the Raj in the 1930s.

Abdul Ghaffar Khan's nationalist movement was Pan-Pathan in its reach, and the social reformation espoused by Abdul Ghaffar and his brother, Dr. Khan Sahib, did not cease at the administrative line between the settled districts and tribal territory. In fact, the tribal belt was a principal target of the nationalists. This was the home turf of what they considered to be the worst excesses of Pathan society: the blood feud, illiteracy, grinding poverty, and an alarming predilection for violence.[35] For the British administration, however, the idea of a Tribal and Red Shirt combination was a nightmare. As much as the British feared what the Pathans in the settled districts might do to sweep away British control, those in the tribal areas were even more "treacherous, superstitious, and priest-ridden." That Mahsuds or Wazirs or Mohmands might join in the nationalist movement was a proposition dreaded by the entire administration.[36] Thus, beginning in

[35] Report from Deputy Inspector General of Police, Intelligence Branch, NWFP, Peshawar (Lawther) to the Director, Intelligence Bureau, Home Department (Williamson), 24 April 1931, National Archives of India (NAI) HOME (POL.) F. 33/8/31 (Part I). See Chapter Three for the social uplift aspect of Abdul Ghaffar Khan's movement. See Stephen Alan Rittenberg, *Ethnicity, Nationalism, and the Pakhtuns: The Independence Movement in India's North-West Frontier Province* (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 1988); and Erland Jansen, *India, Pakistan or Pakhtunistan: The Nationalist Movements in the North-West Frontier Province, 1937-47* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 1981) for information of the sometimes complementary and sometimes conflicting relationship between Abdul Ghaffar's mix of Pathan and Indian nationalism.

[36] General Staff Memorandum on North-West Frontier Policy, 1 November 1920.

May 1930, the authorities in NWFP embarked on a long-term project of sealing the tribal areas off from the "infection" of Indian nationalism.

After the shootings in Peshawar on April 23rd, 1930, and the subsequent British withdrawal from the city two days later, reports and rumors of the affairs in Peshawar spread rapidly across the administrative border in to the tribal belt.[37] In the ensuing breakdown of British authority in the administered districts, a number of nationalist sympathizers entered tribal territory to, as the Commander-in-Chief, Sir William Birdwood, put it, "spread stories of alleged atrocities committed by the troops, of outrages inflicted under the provision of the Sarda Act, of the surrender of Peshawar, the imminent evacuation of Waziristan and indeed the whole North-West Frontier Province, and of the general downfall of British rule."[38] Much of this was taken up by local religious leaders, and, as a result, the entire tribal territory from the Malakand to South Waziristan grew restive.[39]

In the Mohmand country, a tribal *lashkar* moved towards the Vale of Peshawar with the goal of joining the nationalist revolt. As men massed along the administrative border with Peshawar in early May, the new Chief Commissioner, Steuart Pears, called out the RAF and on May 11th they began intense bombing of the nullahs and caves in which the tribesmen sheltered. Further to the south, in Waziristan, a *lashkar* of 4,000 Wazirs attacked a scouts post and the RAF was called out to disperse the armed men and bomb their home villages. These air operations, in which all "personnel" seen were either "bombed or attacked by machine gun fire," commenced throughout the Frontier, and continued, unabated, until the middle of September. The Commander-in-Chief noted that although there were often few targets, casualties had mounted up.[40]

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[37] Note by J.P. Gibson (NWFP Government), 3 June 1930, (IOR) L P&S 12/3123.

[38] See Chapter Three for the events of April 23rd, 1930, and Chapter Four for the immediate aftermath in the settled districts.

[39] Despatch by H.E. Field Marshal Sir William Birdwood, Commander-in-Chief in India, on the Disturbances on the North West Frontier of India from 23rd April to 12th September, 1930, 14 November 1930, (TNA) WO 32/3526.

[40] Despatch by H.E. Field Marshal Sir William Birdwood, 14 November 1930. See also General Staff Annual Summary of Events in North West Frontier Tribal Territory, 1 January 1930-31 December 1930, (IOR) L P&S 12/3170.

By early June, the Mohmand *lashkar* was decimated and lacked sufficient force to invest Peshawar. Similar "successes" had been achieved in Waziristan. At the same time several sections of Afridis from the Khyber Agency, who were sincerely outraged by the stories of British excesses on the Frontier, invaded Peshawar.[41] Aerial bombardment was also used against them, but failed to quell the rebellion until that fall, when a truce was agreed, and the Afridis returned to the Khyber Agency.[42] In the meantime, this apparent cooperation between the Red Shirts in Peshawar and the Afridi invaders deeply disturbed the Frontier administration.[43]

Over the next three years the administration and nationalists engaged in a tense battle over the Frontier.[44] During this period Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his Congress allies made numerous attempts at enlisting the trans-border tribesmen into the nationalist struggle.[45] The British sought to quash these overtures by sealing off the administrative border through the Frontier Crossing Regulation and severe punishments of any suspected Congress agents and heavy fines on anyone who protected them in the tribal belt.[46] Pears informed Simla that he was particularly alarmed by speeches Abdul Ghaffar had been delivering in Karachi and Bombay in which he argued that there was a strong community of interests among Pathans on either side of the administrative border. The Chief Commissioner warned that "if we do not make a stand now against interference of cis-frontier agitators in tribal areas," it would be difficult to maintain Britain's monopoly over tribal policy "under a reformed constitution."[47]

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[41] Memorandum Prepared by the Political Department, India Office: Measures Proposed by the Government of India for Restraining the Afridis, 27 September 1930, (IOR) L P&S 12/3162.

[42] Note by J.C. Walton (Political Secretary, Indian Office) to Findlater Stewart (Under Secretary of State) on the Afridi Situation and the Frontier Generally, 8 September 1931, L P&S 12/3162.

[43] See Chapter Four.

[44] See Chapter Five.

[45] This was especially true in 1931, when the Red Shirts enjoyed a great deal of leeway under the Delhi Pact. See, for instance, NWFP Diary No. 15 for the Week Ending 11 April 1931; NWFP Diary No. 21 for the Week Ending 30 May 1931; NWFP Diary No. 30 for the Week Ending 1 August 1931; NWFP Diary No. 35 for the Week Ending 5 September 1931, (IOR) L P&S 12/3155.

[46] Express Letter from the Resident, Waziristan, to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, NWFP, 6 July 1931, L P&S 12/3123.

[47] Chief Commissioner, NWFP, to Foreign Department, Government of India, 21 April 1931, L P&S 12/3155.

The unrest in the tribal agencies in 1930, combined with the new concern about the relationship between the tribes and the nationalists in British India, led the Government of India to appoint a committee chaired by India's Foreign Secretary, Evelyn Howell.[48] Although the tribal unrest of 1930 paled in comparison to the full-scale revolts of 1919-1922, the entire nature of Frontier administration was again under attack. In Britain, newspapers such as *The Daily Telegraph* attacked the Government's bombing policy as ineffective and the entire administration as weak and divided.[49] In London, William Wedgwood Benn, the Secretary of State for India, felt that "Congress propaganda is an insufficient reason for the tribal disturbances." He said he wished that he knew more "about the economic needs and political demands of these people."[50] Howell's committee, the "Tribal Control and Defence Committee," was charged with getting to the bottom of the Frontier unrest in 1930 and figuring out whether the apparent widespread affinity of the tribes for the nationalist movement in British India emanated from economic distress, Congress "propaganda," or failures in the current system of "control."

The Report of the Tribal Control and Defence Committee, completed in 1931, was a remarkably conservative document. Unsurprisingly, given his long career on the Frontier, Howell argued that the fundamental problem behind the recent unrest was "the virile and martial qualities and the predatory instincts of the tribes," their geographical seclusion, their access to arms, and the relative prosperity of the settled districts of the NWFP.[51] Ignoring much of the actual evidence – especially regarding nationalist sympathies among the Afridis – the report gave Congress influence short shrift, arguing that that a brewing conflict had simply been exacerbated by rumors of British withdrawal

[48] Government of India, Foreign and Political Department, to Secretary of State, 18 December 1930, (IOR) L MIL 7/6649.

[49] See "With the Night Bombers: An Experience of an Air Attack on Afridi Villages" by Ellis Ashhead-Bartlett, in *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 December 1930; and "Keeping India's Frontier: Weakness Caused by a Futile System of Divided Command," by Ellis Ashhead-Bartlett," in *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 December 1930, L MIL 7/6649.

[50] Secretary of State (Benn) to Viceroy (Irwin), 14 August 1930, Halifax Papers (IOR) C152/6.

[51] Report of the Tribal Control and Defence Committee, 1931 (Delhi: Government of India Press, 1931), L P&S 12/3143.

from the Frontier.[52] Howell concluded that any sign of weakness by the British would give the tribes carte blanche to go on a rampage. Tribal transgressions must be met with swift and violent retaliation and there could be no question of removing regular troops from their garrisons at Wana and Razmak. The problem demanded a military solution. Howell's report followed this logic, arguing that "too much" weight had been given to the economic conditions of the tribes. Arguments about the "hungry hills" were exaggerated and development policies would make life too easy for the tribesmen – thus stymieing attempts at "civilization." [53]

The Committee recommended that no major change in policy should be undertaken. The findings were endorsed by the Government of India. Howell's committee did, however, suggest a greater role for the RAF on the Frontier. The Chief of Air Staff in India warmly agreed with this suggestion, which fit into a wider, and ultimately unsuccessful, power grab that the RAF was currently making East of Suez.[54] The Indian General Staff offered stiff resistance, noting that the chief victims of bombing were "old men, women and children." The Indian Army provided London and Delhi with long casualty lists to demonstrate that while aerial bombardment was effective, it was by no means the civilized and humane weapon touted by the RAF.[55] This reaction to an increase in aerial bombing was inspired in part by the ongoing turf war between the two

[52] The India Office files on the "Tribal Unrest" in 1930-31 (Various files between L P&S 12/3122 and L P&S 12/3131) and the NWFP Tribal Territory Diaries make it clear that tribal sympathies for their cis-border brethren played a major role in the events of 1930. Using files found in archives in Islamabad and Peshawar, Sana Haroon comes to a similar conclusion (Haroon, *Frontier of Faith*, pp. 155-166).

[53] Report of the Tribal Control and Defence Committee, 1931.

[54] Comments of Air Vice Marshal J.M. Steel (Air Officer Commanding Royal Air Force India) on the Report of the Tribal Control and Defence Committee, 10 June 1931, CAB 16/87. For the Air Staff's recommendations for sweeping powers in almost all British possessions East of Suez see Memorandum for the Sub-Committee on the Defence of India (Committee of Imperial Defence) by the Chief of the Air Staff (Lord Trenchard)on the Fuller Employment of Air Power in Imperial Defence, November 1929, CAB 16/87. The ensuing debate within Whitehall and Delhi is also found in CAB 16/87.

[55] As an example of the terrible carnage that could accompany aerial bombardment even when given substantial forewarning, the General Staff quoted the1930 aerial bombing of the Massozai in the Kurram Agency an example of these results: "The fighting men of the tribe had already been defeated by our troops in an attempted invasion of the Kurram, though the tribe had not yet surrendered. After due warning aircraft bombed their villages and the results claimed were – 65 persons killed and wounded; 98 animals killed; 69 houses destroyed; 852 trees and 9 entire gardens destroyed; 192 acres of standing crops totally wrecked. Of the personal casualties, reports indicate that more than half were women and children" (General Staff Criticism of the Tribal Control and Defence Committee, 9 May 1931, CAB 16/87).

services, but it also grew out of genuine concern that bombing caused "real hardship."[56] For this reason many conservative voices in Britain who still believed in Britain's "civilizing mission," like the diehard Lord Lloyd, were adamantly opposed to "air control."[57]

The new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, decided to stand pat on Frontier policy. But he did so for explicitly political reasons. He wrote:

> Just at the moment of constitutional revision, and of internal and political unrest throughout India, there would be an undue risk in making any substantial change either in policy or in disposition of troops on the Frontier, which could be interpreted by the tribesmen as indicating a general weakening of British influence, and which might therefore provide an incentive for a general rising in cooperation with agitators in other parts of British India.[58]

This was an ironic decision. Howell's recommendations for a policy of military rather than civil pacification, resting on military occupation and aerial bombardment, and eschewing any type of economic development, was the exact opposite of what most Indian nationalists wanted.

This miscalculation was further exacerbated by the fact that as tribal problems continued into the 1930s, the publicity that British policies and techniques received in the Indian and international press grew. Major bombing campaigns against villages in Bajaur in 1933 and in Mohmand country in 1935 led to, as the pro-Government *Civil & Military Gazette* called it, "a frenzy of sentiment" against the bombing policy in the British and international press.[59] The Raj had a public relations problem.

Over the next two years, story after story appeared in the British papers damning the Government of India's bombing policies. *The Scotsman* called it "unsporting" whereas *The Church of England Newspaper* carried the headline "Bombing Helpless

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[56] For the inter-services struggle between the Army and the RAF in this period see both Omissi, *Air Power*, for the imperial context, and Townshend, "Civilization and 'Frightfulness," for an appraisal of this debate in Iraq and the Middle East.

[57] Hansard, *House of Lords Debates*, 9 April 1930, pp. 22-62.

[58] Despatch from Government of India, Foreign and Political Department, to Sir Samuel Hoare on Frontier Tribal Control and Defence Against Tribal Incursions, 15 September 1931, L P&S 12/3143.

[59] "To Secure Peace on the Frontier" in *The Civil & Military Gazette*, 4 August 1933, (IOR) L P&S 12/3190.

Tribesmen."[60] Citing an Indian nationalist source in Simla, the *Manchester Guardian* stated that the goal of bombing was simply "unnecessary suffering."[61] Along with the Church press, the Labour and socialist press was, predictably, the most scathing. In *The New Leader*, the radical Labour M.P., pacifist, and anti-imperialist Fenner Brockway, whom Willingdon privately referred to as a "horrible man," called the Frontier "Britain's Abyssinia."[62] In his polemic he compared the Haji of Turangzai to Haile Sellasie, and compared British India to Mussolini's Italy.[63] Both were violent aggressors.[64] The Government of India was not without its supporters in the home press. Sir Henry Dobbs, the career Frontier officer and former High Commissioner in Iraq, where he oversaw the construction of an air control policy over the entire country, wrote a forceful letter to the *Times* as early as 1929, arguing for the benefits of aerial bombing.[65] Moreover, British newspapers also described the "vain and vindictive" nature of the tribesmen and featured lurid (yet not necessarily false) tales of the hideous fate that awaited downed airmen at the hands of the tribes.[66]

Tribal bombing was also seen as a threat to international stability. The British press bemoaned what this would mean for the League of Nations' disarmament agenda. A cartoon in the *Yorkshire Observer* asked "what of the undesired effect?" of aerial bombing and showed a biplane entitled "bombing policy" bombarding a ground on which

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[60] "Unsporting Methods: Tribesmen and RAF Bombing," in *The Scotsman*, 21 August 1933, L P&S 12/3190; and "Bombing Helpless Tribesmen," in *The Church of England Newspaper*, 18 August 1933, L P&S 12/3190.

[61] "Philosophy of Bombing, in the *Manchester Guardian*, 4 August 1933, L P&S 12/3190.

[62] Viceroy (Willingdon) to Secretary of State (Sir Samuel Hoare), 29 May 1932, Templewood Papers (IOR) E240/5.

[63] The comparison is interesting – Willingdon himself complained to Hoare that he felt like "a sort of Mussolini in India" following the decision to crack down on Congress in December 1931 (Viceroy to Secretary of State, 20 December 1931, Templewood Papers E240/5.

[64] "Britain's 'Abyssinia' – Secret War Against Independent Tribes Across Indian Frontier," by Fenner Brockway, in *The New Leader*, 27 September 1935, (IOR) L P&S 12/3251.

[65] Sir Henry Dobbs to the *Times*, 5 May 1929, CAB 16/87. For more on Dobbs (who also served at Britain's first Minister to Kabul following the Third Afghan War) role in the use of air control in Iraq, see Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 142.

[66] "The Fear Nothing on Earth: Tribesmen of the North-West Frontier – Cannot Be Civilised" in *The Daily Telegraph*, 1933, L P&S 12/3190; and "Perils of the Indian Frontier: Insults and Torture Await Our Captured Airmen," in the *Evening Advertiser*, 7 August 1933, L P&S 12/3190.

was painted "the cause of disarmament."[67] In Germany, bombing was portrayed as further proof of Albion's perfidy, and the new National Socialist leadership claimed that it demonstrated Germany's need to rearm with a *Luftwafte*. An ominous cartoon in Munich's *Jugend* comparing Hitler's "paper bomb" demonstrations with images of fleeing "natives" being bombed into oblivion on the North-West Frontier.[68] In other foreign presses, the Irish Free State treated the bombing policy on the Frontier as another example of Britain's callousness towards those yearning to be free.[69] The American press was less hostile, but still voiced concern about the human toll.[70]

The negative nature of this publicity concerned both London and Delhi. Gone were the days when Frontier administrators could carry on with their policies in a political vacuum. The bombing policy was increasingly questioned in both houses of parliament. Gandhi, who truly understood the importance of image and the modern media, had demonstrated the power of negative publicity over the course of the Civil Disobedience movement and the authorities in India recognized this. The administration tried to keep the lid on reports of aerial bombardment, inviting reporters who were known to be friendly on aerial surveys of the Frontier and keeping out those whom they believed to be critical.[71] Yet criticism continued and this publicity about the aerial bombings gave the Raj's "numerous critics fresh opportunities for ventilating their views." British officials worried in the long run this criticism could perhaps even force the Raj to suspend air operations.[72]

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[67] "What of the Undesired Effect?," in the *Yorkshire Observer*, 3 August 1933, L P&S 12/3190. The British delegation to the League of Nations Disarmament Conference in 1933 successfully insisted that aerial bombardment on the Frontier be excepted from any agreement, a decision that helped to neuter the final accord.

[68] Cutting from *Jugend*, 3 September 1933, L P&S 12/3190. As an effort to scare the German people about the need for rapid rearmament and full-scale air force, the Munich chapter of the Reich Civil Defence League staged a mock air raid over the city in August 1933. A number of low flying aircraft dropped "paper bombs" weighted with small bags of sand. In the aftermath, SA men swarmed the city in gas masks, clearing "debris" and attending to the "wounded" (see David Clay Large, *Where Ghosts Walked: Munich's Road to the Third Reich* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1997), p. 300).

[69] "The North-Western Frontier," in the *Cork Examiner*, 4 August 1933, L P&S 12/3190.

[70] Angus Fletcher (Secretary, British Library of Information) to Sir Findlater Stewart, 15 August 1933, L P&S 12/3190.

[71] J.C. Walton to Sir Aubrey Metcalfe, 14 February 1936, L P&S 12/3190; and Sir Aubrey Metcalfe to J.C. Walton, 24 December 1935, L P&S 12/3190.

[72] J.C. Walton to R.A. Butler (Undersecretary of State for India), 20 February 1936, L P&S 12/3190.

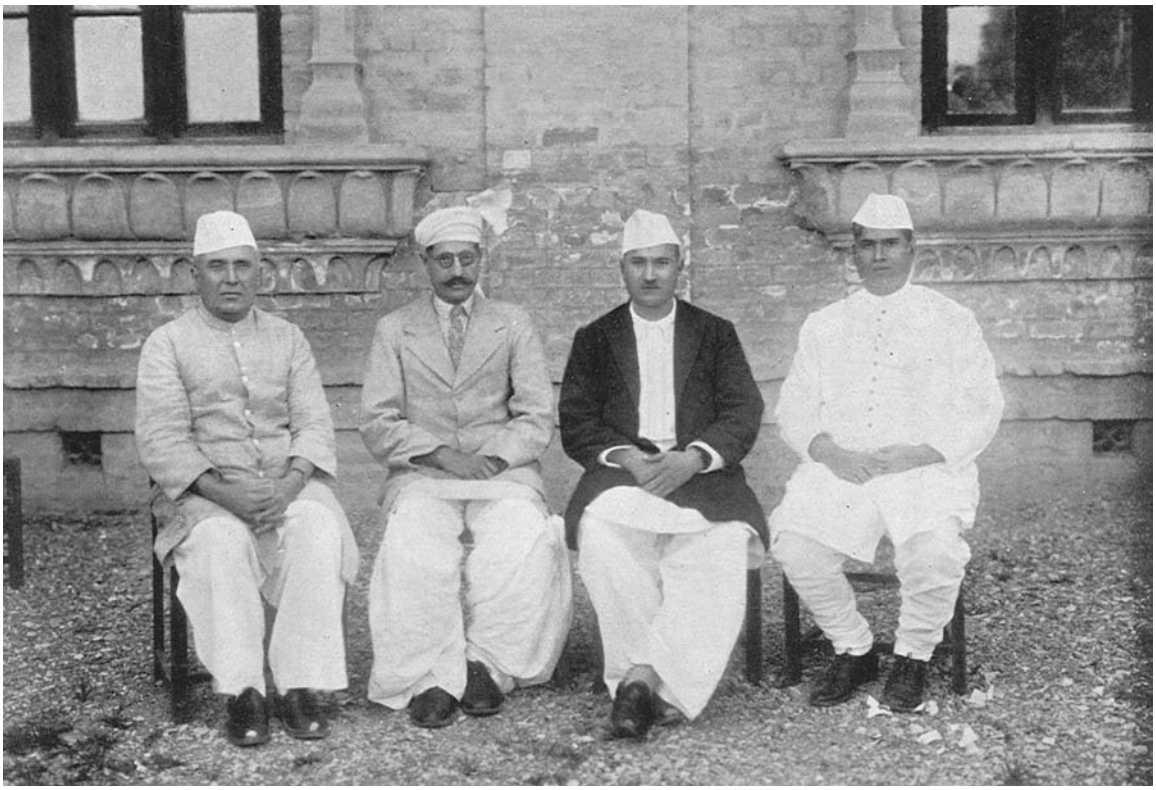

Illustration 8: Congress Ministers, NWFP, 1937 (Dr. Khan Sahib sits on far left)[73]

By the mid-1930s the "numerous critics" who most concerned the British were those in the Indian National Congress. During a series of bombings over Mohmand country in 1935, the Government of India acted to suppress all mention of the heavy bombardment that was underway. They knew however, that Dr. Khan Sahib, who had been elected to the Central Legislative Assembly in 1935, had been in contact with Mohmand leaders and planned to "ventilate" his deep concerns about air control in the Assembly – something that had been heretofore forbidden.[74] Criticism of aerial policy was an unwelcome development, but more than this, the British knew that aerial

[73] Reproduced from Rai Bahadur Diwan Chand Obhrai, *The Evolution of North-West Frontier Province: Being A Survey of the History and Constitutional Development of N.-W. F. Province in India* (Peshawar: London Book Company (India), Ltd., 1938), opp. p. 314.

[74] J.G. Acheson (Acting Foreign Secretary, Government of India) to J.C. Walton, 20 August 1935, L P&S 12/3190.

bombardment on the Frontier offered a wedge for wider nationalist concerns about British policy on the Frontier.

The nationalist critique of Britain's tribal policy came to the fore in the Central Legislative Assembly – then sitting at Simla – in September 1935, when, as predicted, Khan Sahib proposed a vote of censure of the "bombing of women and children on the Frontier."[75] In a full-dress debate between the Government and some of the leading lights of the Congress party, the wider issues of the "Frontier problem" and the "forward policy" were drawn into the heated discussion. Although the British had encountered Indian critiques in the past – most notably from Sir Muhammad Shafi in 1922 – this was new. The Congress members produced a damning indictment of Britain's policies and intentions in the tribal belt.[76]

The crux of the nationalist argument was that it was the British, and their forward policy of military occupation and aerial bombardment, that lay at the heart of the "Frontier problem." The tribes were traditionally democratic, and so any policy that included roads and Government interference into their lives was bound to lead to warfare. This warfare was a curse. Not without reason, the Congress argued that these wars simply gave British officers an opportunity to gain medals, and provided a convenient excuse to retain control of India's defence and maintain the Indian Army at an inflated and bankrupting size.[77] During the Simla debate, the eminent attorney and leader of Congress in the Assembly, Bhulabhai Desai, argued:

> Once you have got an army there is always an inclination – almost a justification for its use…In fact it is this very talk of warfare which throughout the last 30 years has been the only excuse for piling up the armaments at the expense of the poor people of this country.[78]

[75] *Indian Central Legislative Assembly Debates*, 4 September 1935, pp. 377.

[76] Confidential Memorandum on the Waziristan Problem by Muhammad Shafi, December 1922, Hailey Papers E220/3c.

[77] It is interesting to note that this was a key part of the argument that Sir John Maffey made against the extension of the forward policy in Waziristan in the early 1920s. Maffey wrote of "this great blood-sucking Frontier which has drained us of men and money for nearly a hundred years is still the playground of chance decisions, personal predilections and professional ambitions" (Memorandum by Sir John Maffey: Unsolicited Views on an Unsolved Problem, 2 August 1922, Hailey Papers E220/3c).

[78] *Indian Central Legislative Assembly Debates*, 4 September 1935, p. 392.

Moreover, it was putting the name of the Indian taxpayer on a barbaric policy of civilian bombing enforced by a "foreign autocrat." The Government, keen to make their own arguments public, made disingenuous statements regarding the written warnings dropped on illiterate tribesmen as proof that "no women or children" were ever present when bombardment commenced. Another nationalist argued that, even if this were true, a similar policy taken against London would be widely condemned. This was barbarism on the "German model."[79] Desai remarked that although Indians were "less scientific and mechanized," at least they believed in civilization.[80] By their actions, it was clear the British did not. When the house divided, every elected member, and thus a majority, voted in favor of the censure.

WAZIRISTAN, CONGRESS, AND FAILURE OF FRONTIER POLICY

Rather than just another debate in a toothless talking shop, the Simla debate inaugurated a new phase of Indian opposition to the Raj's tribal policy. In the first half of the 1930s much of the criticism of the Government's behavior in the agencies was located in the British and foreign press. Indian politicians and the Indian press understandably focused on the life and death struggle taking place in the administered districts. But the Government of India Act was signed in August of 1935 and the Frontier was now a full governor's province with a nascent (if often sycophantic) press was growing in Peshawar.[81] Crucially, elections for a *responsible* provincial government, as provided by the new constitution, were being arranged. With the overwhelming popularity of Abdul Ghaffar Khan and the Red Shirts, it looked likely that the NWFP would have a Congress Ministry. With these issues settled, Congress, and Congress's allies increasingly focused on the nature of Britain's regime in the tribal areas.

Congress was given a prime example of the continued problem of tribal administration in March 1936, when a fifteen-year-old Hindu girl from Bannu, named

[79] *Indian Central Legislative Assembly Debates*, 4 September 1935, p. 384.
[80] *Indian Central Legislative Assembly Debates*, 4 September 1935, p. 395.
[81] The main paper in the province, *The Khyber Mail*, was decidedly pro-Government.

Ram Kori, eloped with a Pathan schoolmaster named Noor Ali Shah from a village in Waziristan. Ram Kori converted to Islam and took the name Noor Jehan, but became better known as "Islam Bibi." Since she was a minor, the girl's family pressed charges and the Resident in Waziristan, James Acheson, gave permission to the Deputy Commissioner of Bannu to enter tribal territory and take her into custody. Noor Ali was arrested on a charge of abduction. The case reached the court in Bannu city "amid a blaze of publicity." With the case now in the legal system, Frontier officials had their hands tied and the sitting magistrate handled the case in an impartial manner that was bound to create communal tension. It was clear that the girl had joined Noor Ali of her own free will, but since there was no "proof of legal marriage," he was convicted of abduction and given two years' imprisonment. "Islam Bibi" refused to return to her mother and was thus put under the care of a third party until she reached her majority.[82] The case, and the threat of the girls' conversion to Islam being forcibly overturned, had inflamed religious feeling in the region. This sentiment burst into full scale revolt in August when the Judicial Commissioner in Peshawar overturned the earlier ruling and returned Islam Bibi to her mother and, presumably, Hinduism.[83]

Led by a local mullah named Mirza Ali Khan – better known as the Faqir of Ipi – Waziristan, which had been the showcase for the efficacy of the forward policy over the previous 15 years, exploded in revolt.[84] The two year attempt to pacify Waziristan required modern artillery, tanks, armored cars, and 50,000 troops in order to "pacify" fewer than 100,000 men, women, and children.[85] By 1937 it was clear to all that the interwar policy of "peaceful penetration" illustrated by the Waziristan model of roads, military occupation, allowances, and "air control" had failed. Among the British this fact

[82] Warren, *Waziristan*, pp. 80-82.

[83] *Tribal Disturbances in Waziristan (25th November, 1936 – 13th June, 1937) Presented by the Secretary of State for India to Parliament, June 1937* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1937), (IOR) L P&S 12/3187.

[84] For the Waziristan campaign of 1936-37, see Government of India, *Official History of Operations o the North-West Frontier of India, 1936-1937* (Delhi: Government of India Press, 1938); Milan Hauner, "One Man Against the Empire: The Faqir of Ipi and the British in Central Asia on the Eve and During the Second World War", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 16 (1981), pp. 183-212; Warren, *Waziristan*; and Bruce, *Waziristan*.

[85] Barton, India's North-West Frontier, p. 251.

led to a great deal of soul searching. Some, such as the redoubtable C.E. Bruce, argued that the policy had failed because it had not followed Sandeman's system closely enough.[86] Some, such as the former Commander-in-Chief, Philip Chetwode, believed that it was because the tribesmen's women had been mocking them for their peaceful ways.[87] Yet others, such as Aubrey Metcalfe, the Indian Foreign Secretary, believed that there had been no trouble for a number of years and that the younger generation, "who have never experienced Government's wrath, are anxious to try conclusions with Government and to have a fight, even if the results are unpleasant."[88]

This dark night of the Frontier officer's soul was readily joined by the cavalcade of Congress criticism that seized upon the Waziristan revolt. In the Central Legislative Assembly, where Frontier policy was now allowed to come under official debate, Congressmen hammered away at the Government. Asaf Ali, the deputy leader of the Congress in the Assembly, stated that the Government was pursuing a policy of "aggression, pure and simple." The long-time critic went on:

> These operations are necessitated by the fact that the British Indian Government has been treating the independent tribal territory as their own and they have been trying to bring a people who are utterly independent under control. The result is that these people, who have never allowed themselves to be subdued by anybody throughout the ages, resent it and will want to retaliate.

Asaf Ali, supported by Dr. Khan Sahib, insisted that the Government of India's forward policy was "preposterous." It was time, he argued, to leave the "independent" tribesmen alone.[89] During the debate Ali backed up his assertions with a book entitled *The Problem of the North-West Frontier* (1932) by a former Gurkha officer named C.C. Davies, then lecturing at the School of African and Oriental Studies in London. In the book Davies investigated the problems of the Government's policies on the Frontier from 1890 to 1908. A serious scholarly work, the book voiced criticisms that were seized upon by

[86] Lt.-Colonel C.E. Bruce, *Waziristan, 1936-1937: The Problems of the North-West Frontiers of India and Their Solutions* (Aldershot: Gale and Polden, 1938).
[87] Letter from Sir Philip Chetwode to C.E. Bruce, 4 January 1938, Bruce Papers (IOR) F163/65.
[88] Sir Aubrey Metcalfe to J.C. Walton, 22 March 1937, Walton Papers (IOR) D545/9.
[89] *Indian Central Legislative Assembly Debates*, 8 March 1937, pp. 1616-1619.

nationalists.[90] They were particularly drawn to Davies' assertion that "we can never hope to solve the Frontier Problem until the tribesmen are able to gain a livelihood without being forced to raid the settled districts. So long as hungry tribesmen inhabit barren hills which command open and fertile plains, so long will they resort to plundering incursions in order to obtain the necessities of life."[91] Economics became the centerpiece of the Congress' case against the Government's Frontier policy.

In his 200-page book on the North-West Frontier, Gandhi's long-time associate, Rev. C.F. Andrews carried this argument forward, and called for a policy based on a "new economic foundation" and a "transformation of the purely military regime for one wherein the benefits of civilized government play an ever increasing part…economic development and the provision of medical relief, along with attempts at education."[92] Like the British officers who had used the Scottish Highlands analogy to buttress the road-building that underlay the forward policy, nationalists used the example of the Highlands to make the case for economic development, arguing that the Highlander "problem" only dissipated after they were offered economic parity through employment in "the army, navy and similar branches of the civil administration."[93]

Jawaharlal Nehru, who travelled to the NWFP in 1938, agreed with this approach. In a speech at Bannu, Nehru asserted that the whole British approach to the tribal regions had been wrong and "worse than futile." The British policy was "rooted in hostility."

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[90] Davies had served on the Western Front in the First World War. After being shot through a lung he was sent to India in 1918 to wait out the war as a captain in the 2/1st Gurkha Rifles. Davies was still with the regiment when the Third Afghan War erupted and he saw several years of service on the Frontier. When he returned to England and took up an academic career, first at SOAS and later at Oxford, he parlayed his Frontier service into a study of Frontier policy in the 1890s and 1910s. *The Problem of the North-West Frontier*, which was the first work on the Frontier by a non-official who had access to official records in the India Office, remains a masterwork (C. H. Philips, "Cuthbert Collin Davies: A Tribute," in Donovan Williams and E. Daniel Potts, (eds.), *Essays in Indian History: In Honour of Cuthbert Collin Davies* (New York: Asia Publishing House, 1973), pp. vii-ix).

[91] Davies, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier*, p. 179, quoted in Mohammad Yunus, *Frontier Speaks: With a Forward by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru* (Bombay: Hind Kitabs, Ltd.), p. 83.

[92] C. F. Andrews, *The Challenge of the North-West Frontier: A Contribution to World Peace* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1937), pp. 65-66.

[93] Yunus, *Frontier Speaks*, p. 83. The Highland analogy is a fascinating one, and the geography and people of the Pathan borderlands were often compared to the Highlands. Moreover, the cadre of Political Officers who administered the Frontier was disproportionately Scots in background. Names like Duncan, Donald, Cunningham, Bruce, and Fraser litter the history of British service on the Frontier.

The right approach was one of friendship and cooperation and the economic problems of the region could be easily tackled. Nehru and the Congress party believed that the military should be withdrawn from the tribal areas, the system of allowances curtailed, and that money should be invested in tapping into the region's supposed mineral wealth.[94] Numerous other Congress politicians and publications echoed Nehru's ideas.[95] In the NWFP, Khan Sahib suggested that the trans-border tribesmen be left alone and advocated mutual goodwill, and honesty. Nehru and Madeleine Slade – Gandhi's Mirabehn – offered to tour the tribal territories and convince the people there to follow Gandhian non-violence. Gandhi himself, who had been in contact with several tribal leaders when he visited the Frontier in 1937, believed that spinning could help the economic condition of the tribal belt.[96]

Congress attacks on Frontier policy continued throughout 1937 and 1938. In 1937, the All-India Congress Committee session at Faizpur condemned the Government of India's tribal policy, stating that it was imperialist, it failed in its purpose, that it was designed to justify an increase in military expenditure, train troops – a charge given credence by a recent speech by Philip Chetwode arguing just that – and that it was uncivilized. Writing in Delhi's *National Call* in July 1937, Asaf Ali called on the Government to invite Congress to take over India's Frontier policy; a similar article appeared in the *Tribune* calling for a full scale economic development scheme in the tribal areas.[97] The Congress party's largest single document on the tribal areas, their 1938 *Report on North-West Frontier Province and Bannu Raids*, published in response to a massive increase of kidnappings in the wake of the Waziristan revolt, called for a total

[94] Yunus, *Frontier Speaks*, p. 93. Yunus' volume was originally written in the late 1930s but was proscribed by the Government of India for the duration of the Second World War. The Congress Party always emphasized the "democratic" character of the Pathans, arguing that this was the reason that the British continually failed to pacify the region. The British also discussed the "democratic" nature of the Pathans. In this case, however, democracy was essentially equated to chaos and anarchy.

[95] See, for instance, Jagat S. Bright, *Frontier and Its Gandhi* (Lahore: All Indian Publishers, 1944).

[96] Note by Sir George Cunningham (Governor, NWFP), 20 June 1939. A full report of Gandhi's tour can be found in Pyarelal Nair's *A Pilgrimage for Peace: Gandhi and Frontier Gandhi Among the N.W.F. Pathans* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1950). D. G Tendulkar provides a full account of both Gandhi and Nehru's Frontier tours in *Abdul Ghaffar Khan: Faith is a Battle* (Bombay: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1967), pp. 217-288.

[97] Note by Sir George Cunningham, 20 June 1939.

rollback of the forward policy and an end to Britain's militaristic attempt to subdue the "independent tribes."[98]

Liberal and pacifist opinion in Britain also seized upon the idea that the root of the "tribal problem" was economic. C.F. Andrews, who kept a foot in both countries, had, of course, argued that the problem was economic, but many others did as well. Although Andrew's book was denigrated by officials in India and London, another book which emphasized poverty, published by the Quaker Peace Committee, received a far less hostile review within the India Office.[99] The issue of tribal poverty was also at the center of a meeting of the National Peace Council on "Frontier Problems and Policy" in 1936.[100] The "peace" conference was attended by several retired Army and Frontier officers, including Sir Francis Younghusband, a recent convert to the premise of Indian nationalism.[101] This was telling. The fact of the matter was that Congress's argument was gaining ground. Although a return to a "close border" policy in the tribal areas remained beyond the pale for many officers with memories of the collapse of Curzon's system in 1919, the current system was clearly failing as well. A policy of economic development provided an alluring middle ground between the militaristic forward policy of the last 20 years and the alternate extreme of building some sort of Great Wall of China between India and the tribal tracts.[102] Senior Politicals like Sir William Barton – no friend of Indian nationalism – argued that that if only a third of the over £4 million spent on military campaigns since 1919 had been spent on economic development "there would be

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[98] All India Congress Committee, *Report on North-West Frontier Province and Bannu Raids, 1938* (New Delhi: The Hindustan Times Press, 1938), pp. 50-52.

[99] See J.C. Walton to Sir Findlater Stewart, 20 November 1937, L P&S 12/3251; Carl Heath, *The North-West Frontier of India* (London: Friends' Peace Literature Committee, 1937), L P&S 12/3251; J.C. Walton to Sir Findlater Stewart, 22 November 1937, L P&S 12/3251.

[100] National Peace Conference, *Frontier Problems and Policy: Report of a Conference Held in London, 7 April 1936*, Hopkinson Papers (IOR) D998/11.

[101] See Sir Francis Younghusband, K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E., *Dawn in India: British Purpose and Indian Aspiration* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1931); see also Patrick French's excellent biography of Younghusband (*Younghusband: The Last Great Imperial Adventurer* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994)) which traces the great man's strange journey from muscular Christianity and staunch imperialism to spiritualism, Indian nationalism, and free love.

[102] Comments by the Governor of the North-West Frontier Province on the Frontier Committee's Report, 1945, 12 July 1945, (IOR) L P&S 12/3266.

a different story to tell." Moreover, the problem could no longer be treated in isolation: future policy would have to attract the maximum support from "political India."[103]

Although more officials were coming to see Waziristan as a civil problem rooted in economic underdevelopment, the nature of the Waziristan revolt convinced others that their longstanding assumptions about the region were true. The policy of roads and partial military occupation may have been a failure, but the fundamental problem remained the fanatical tendencies of the Mahsuds and Wazirs, a fact underlined by the recent leadership of the revolt by the Faqir of Ipi. The chief intelligence officer on the Frontier, Major J.A. Robinson, argued that the Faqir's revolt in fact made it clear that the root of the problem was *not* economic. The tribal sections that led the revolt, such as the Tori Khel Wazirs, were "the most prosperous" in Waziristan. Inequalities in tribal allowances may have had some role but it could not be argued that the root of the disturbances was economic.

For Robinson, the fact that it was the wealthiest tribal sections that revolted proved that the problem was that the tribes remained fanatically devoted to their independence and would not submit to "non-Muslim dominion." In a memorandum circulated throughout the Frontier administration, Robinson argued that the unrest stemmed from the urgings of religious leaders influenced by the nationalist movement in the administered districts of the Frontier. He wrote.

> The religious (and political) leaders in both sides of the administrative border are closely connected. Most of the important Mullahs of tribal territory have received their religious education in mosques within the border, and their sympathies are definitely with Indian Muslims, not only in religion, which is natural, but in politics, which follows…This association between religious leaders on both sides of the border ensures that any movement involving religion in any way, particularly where it is feared for the safety of religion, will be felt in British India and tribal territory, though reactions may take different forms according to the usual methods of expression in them: meetings in British India; armed lashkars in tribal territory.

Nationalism and Islam was a double edged sword, however. Robinson concluded that the Waziristan tribes believed that the recent passing of the Government of India Act, 1935, meant that the British were yielding to a Hindu majority that would inevitably lead to

[103] Barton, *India's North-West Frontier*, pp. 252-256.

"Hindu domination." This communal issue had led to a "great deal of anxiety and instability in the tribal mind." This abdication of British power to Hindus had sparked the revolt, with Islam Bibi merely providing the context. The resulting war, however, "caused sympathizers of the Faqir of Ipi to further harden their hearts against a Government which they now considered to be more unjust than ever, and more antagonistic to Islam."[104]

The view that the revolt was rooted in religious sentiment was accepted by the Governor of the NWFP, Sir George Cunningham, who, like many of his generation, believed he "knew the Pathan mind" better than the Pathan himself.[105] Cunningham was, along with Howell and Caroe, one of the giants of the Frontier administration. Small and compact, Cunningham had a brilliant career as an undergraduate at Magdalen College, Oxford. Caroe, who matriculated at Magdalen the year after Cunningham left, recalled dons and undergraduates alike "speaking of him as having almost run the college when president of the junior common room."[106] Thereafter he played Rugby for Scotland and left for India in 1911. Cunningham, who very much kept his own counsel and rarely showed emotion, possessed a magnetic personality and even those that disagreed with him respected and liked him immensely.[107] He began his Frontier service as Roos-Keppel's assistant during the First World War and, as the Political Agent for North Waziristan, was an early advocate of a forward policy.[108] His basic thinking was thoroughly traditional and he was unsure "whether a Pathan is more likely to give trouble when he is in poverty or when he waxes fat." [109]

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[104] Report on the Disturbances of 1936-37 in Waziristan and their Causes, by Major J.A. Robinson (Assistant Director, Intelligence, Government of India), 27 July 1947, Mallam Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, Cambridge University (CSAS).

[105] G.L. Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis and a Cassock* (Privately Published, 1978), Mallam Papers. See also, Notes on Waziristan by Sir George Cunningham, 1939, Cunningham Papers (IOR) D670/13.

[106] Unpublished Caroe Memoirs.

[107] See Norval Mitchell, *Sir George Cunningham: A Memoir* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, Ltd., 1968). See also Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*; and Fraser Noble, *Something in India* (London: Pentland Press, 1997).

[108] Notes by Political Agent, Miranshah (George Cunningham), on Razmak Policy, 6 November 1922, Cunningham Papers D670/13.

[109] Comments by the Governor of the North-West Frontier Province on the Frontier Committee's Report, 1945, 12 July 1945.

Illustration 9: Sir George Cunningham, Governor of the NWFP, 1936-46 and 1947-48[110]

Yet Cunningham, unlike a number of his Frontier colleagues – such as Caroe and Howell – distinguished himself with his flexibility. He had built a strong personal and working relationship with Dr. Khan Sahib, who had become the Congress Premier of the NWFP in September 1937, and clearly believed that the future belonged to the nationalists.[111] Cunningham realized that Congress was taking an increasing interest in the tribal areas. With the likelihood of an All-Indian federation on the horizon, their

[110] Reproduced from Obhrai, *The Evolution of North-West Frontier Province*, opp. p. 302.
[111] See Mitchell, *Sir George Cunningham*.

views would have to be taken into account. When the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, who was conducting a review of Frontier policy in 1939, asked Cunningham for his views, the Governor informed Linlithgow that Indian public opinion would have to be consulted in any future policy.[112]

The Viceroy took Cunningham's advice. Prior to succeeding Willingdon as Viceroy in 1936, Linlithgow had chaired the Joint-Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform. He was a staunch conservative who had little patience for Indian nationalism and believed that Britain should retain a strong position in India for the foreseeable future. He had a notably terrible relationship with Gandhi – though Lord Halifax (Irwin) observed that Linlithgow did "not really get on human terms with anybody."[113] Despite this, Linlithgow realized that British policy in the tribal areas had failed. In a 1939 report, drafted by Lord Linlithgow in cooperation with his influential Private Secretary, Sir Gilbert Laithwaite, the Viceroy claimed that the forward policy had "failed" to realize its own goals, the most important of which was the extension of "civilization" to the tribal areas. Linlithgow believed that the time was ripe to revisit a policy of economic development and civil pacification on the Frontier. Since 1922 military operations had constituted the principal means of enforcing control and advancing "civilization."

Whereas the Howell Committee had confirmed the forward policy in 1931 and dismissed other tactics, such as economic development, as ineffective, there was now a shift. The Viceroy noted that although a number of authorities expressed grave doubts about the economic underpinnings of the tribal problem, he had decided to commission a survey of the economic conditions in Waziristan and move forward on the construction of a hydroelectric facility in Malakand. Furthermore, it was important to create employment opportunities and improve educational and medical service in the tribal districts.

[112] Note by Sir George Cunningham, 20 June 1939.

[113] Lord Halifax (Irwin) to Lord Templewood (Sir Samuel Hoare), 13 July 1953, Templewood Papers E240/76. For Linlithgow's momentous Viceroyalty, see Gowher Rizvi, *Linlithgow and India: A Study of British Policy and Political Impasse in India, 1936-43* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978); and John Glendevon's sympathetic study of his father, *Viceroy at Bay: Lord Linlithgow in India, 1936-1943* (London: Collins, 1971).

Significantly, the memorandum mooted the reduction of regular troops in the Wana and Razmak garrisons.[114]

Tribal policy was also hindered by the spread of "democratic ideas," which undermined the authority of the *maliks*, whose power the British had attempted to foster. The constitutional and political situation in India posed serious problems for the freedom of British action on the Frontier. Linlithgow wrote:

> Frontier policy has become moreover of great interest to those Indian politicians who desire to see the establishment of a responsible system of Government at the Centre. Our difficulties on the Frontier provide them with a welcome weapon of criticism which unites the Hindu and Moslem in the defence of the so-called "independence" of the marauding tribes. The tribesmen themselves are becoming increasingly politically minded and are quick to take advantage of any phase of Indian politics which assists them to combat efforts to control them.

Among the chief limitations which Indian political consciousness placed on British policy was the use of air control. Although the Viceroy considered the use of aerial bombardment an effective tool against recalcitrant tribes, he concluded that the Government of India must now "take into account the severe restrictions imposed by public opinion both in India and abroad on the effective use of air action especially against those whom we claim to be our subjects." It was clear that New Delhi needed a policy that could succeed in pacifying the tribes and also mollify public opinion in India.[115]

CONCLUSION

The Secretary of State for India, Lord Zetland – a latter-day Curzonian, Governor of Bengal, and Frontier expert in his own right – approved the recommendations outlined in Linlithgow's memorandum.[116] Yet, with war on the horizon, any major changes in Frontier policy would have to be postponed until the cessation of hostilities with Germany. Zetland wrote that after the war there would have to be another appraisal of

[114] Memorandum by His Excellency the Viceroy on Frontier Policy, 22 July 1939, (IOR) L P&S 12/3265.

[115] Memorandum by His Excellency the Viceroy on Frontier Policy, 22 July 1939.

[116] See, for instance, Lawrence John Lumley Dundas, Earl of Ronaldshay (Zetland's earlier courtesy title), *India: A Bird's-Eye View* (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1924).

policy, hopefully along the lines of Linlithgow's report.[117] When this reappraisal eventually took place in 1944, the report, authored by Lt.-General Sir Francis Tuker, followed the same path as Linlithgow: the forward policy had failed; the root of the tribal violence and raids was poverty; and "political India" would have to be consulted. [118]

Thus, in the early 1920s, as the Government of India grappled with Gandhi's non-cooperation movement and a financial crisis, London and Delhi had nevertheless managed to forge a new tribal policy in a political vacuum, focusing on the decades old Russian threat and the role of Afghanistan in fomenting unrest among the "fanatical" tribes of the North-West Frontier. Soldiers and officials carried on as if Victoria was still the Queen-Empress. By 1939 this illusion had been torn asunder. In the intervening years the cause of Indian nationalism had gone from strength to strength. It was a slow and often tortuous process, and the British still held the whip by virtue of their control of the Indian Army. But the writing was on the wall. A key constraint of the interwar years – the impact of negative publicity on the British Raj, expertly utilized by the Indian National Congress, had made major inroads in the Government of India's ability to act without consequence. The tribal areas, still officially beyond the border of "British India," were slowly but surely being integrated into the Indian political consciousness.

The key reason for this was the nature of the British policy in the tribal areas. Regardless of whether the specific area was supposedly managed through the "forward policy" of outright military occupation, a "close border" regime of minimal interference, or somewhere in between, the fact remained that all these policies rested on a philosophy of violence. The Army and Frontier cadre that was charged with formulating and carrying out policy on the Frontier all started with the fundamental assumption that the "problem" of the tribal areas stemmed from the violent nature of Pathan society. The only solution was military pacification. There was some acknowledgment that poverty might play a role in the near constant unrest, and the road systems built in the Waziristan and the Mohmand country in this period were meant to foster trade as much as they were made for military transportation. Yet through an admixture of ideological resistance to any real

[117] Zetland to Linlithgow, 26 February 1940, L P&S 12/3265.
[118] Report of the Frontier Committee, 1945, L P&S 12/3266.

expenditure on economic development, and the simple fact the Government of India was on shoestring budget throughout this era, the economic factors were shunted aside in favor of a military solution.[119]

As the tumult of the All-Indian political situation temporarily subsided in the mid-1930s, nationalist attention was drawn to Frontier and the British policy of military pacification. In particular, the policy of aerial bombardment scandalized opinion, both in India and overseas. In light of an international situation that included Italy's brutal invasion of Abyssinia, the Japanese invasion and rape of China, and the rapid rearmament of Europe, air control on the Frontier was seen as direct proof of British hypocrisy when dealing with its Indian subjects. Bombing opened the door to a wider criticism of tribal policy, which in the wake of the Faqir of Ipi's revolt, appeared to be not only barbaric and unnecessarily violent, but a failure as well. By 1939, Congress ran the NWFP government and many, including the Viceroy, believed that an All-Indian federation with Congress in a strong position was just around the corner. Frontier policy could no longer be carried out in the shadows.

[119] See Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, p. 100; and Warren, *Waziristan*, p. 61.

CONCLUSION:
THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER AND THE END OF EMPIRE, 1940-1947

The Interwar years witnessed a dramatic diminution of British freedom of action on India's North-West Frontier. At the beginning of this epoch, in the midst of the postwar crisis of empire of 1919-22, authorities in both London and Delhi took a traditional imperial approach to the Frontier. A forward policy of military occupation was pursued in Waziristan and areas of the Khyber Agency, while in the settled districts any suggestion of extending All-Indian political reform was forcefully removed from the table. Having effectively sealed off the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) from the rest of India, the Frontier administration pursued policies that took little heed of popular opinion both within and without the Frontier. Yet a nationalist movement grew on the Frontier, and the brutal British response to it between 1930 and 1933 invited nationalist scrutiny. Despite rearguard actions such as the Government of India Act, the 1930s was an era of increasing constraints on British policy in the NWFP, both in the settled districts and the tribal tracts. Whereas the Viceroy in 1925 could confidently foresee a policy of aerial bombardment of tribal civilians free of future criticism, a later Viceroy in 1939 confessed that Frontier policy was, and would be, "severely restricted" by Indian public opinion.[1]

THE INDIAN EMPIRE AND IMPERIAL RETREAT

This change reflected more than a mere reassessment of the means of imperial control. Unadulterated British control of the Frontier constituted a central premise of British imperialism in the Indian subcontinent. *Pax Britannica* was meant to include both internal peace *and* the protection of India's North-West Frontiers against the historical invasions that had streamed through the Khyber Pass for millennia. That the future of Frontier policy might lay in the hands of a Federal Congress ministry, as both the

[1] See Chapter Seven.

Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, and the NWFP Governor, Sir George Cunningham, assumed it soon would, was a real defeat for Britain's self-imposed historical mission in India.

The advent of the Second World War staved off this inevitability. Historians have rightly identified the old story of post-1918 constant imperial decline as "suspiciously whiggish" and argued that although there were undoubted signs of decline in the interwar years, the war with Germany and Japan amounted to a "revival" of the British Empire.[2] As in the Great War, the imperialists took the helm in London and strengthened the imperial system of control. That Churchill, that old foe of Indian constitutional reform would declare himself unwilling to preside over the dissolution of the British Empire and that the British people would be willing to pay for the Empire despite the imminent invasion of their home islands, is seen as proof that there remained a will for empire.[3]

This is an attractive model for India during the Second World War. The Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, declared India at war with the King's enemies without so much as consulting the nationalist leadership. The British regained total control of most of India's provinces as Congress ministries, who had resigned in protest over Linlithgow's unilateral declaration, were replaced by Governor's rule under section 93 of the Government of India Act.[4] Congress's "Quit India" campaign in 1942 was ruthlessly

[2] See John Darwin, "Imperialism in Decline?: Tendencies in British Imperial Policy Between the Wars," *The Historical Journal*, 23, 3 (1980), pp. 657-679. The traditional view of steady decline throughout the post World War One period is found in A.P. Thornton's *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies: A Study in British Power* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1959). The principal argument that the Second World War constituted a revival of British imperialism is found in John Gallagher's *The Decline, Revival and Fall of the British Empire: The Ford Lectures and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). While this may be true for the British Empire as a whole, this argument is very difficult to make for India. In his recent *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918-1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), which focuses on imperial "dysfunction" in the aftermath of the Great War, Ronald Hyam argues that Gallagher made "the fairly obvious point that decline was discontinuous," and that India made important contributions to the Allied effort during the war. But, "the theme of 'revival' is not all that significant." Hyam claims that Gallagher introduced the word "revival" to avoid any direct echo of Gibbon (p. 34).

[3] John Gallagher and Anil Seal, "Britain and India Between the Wars," *Modern Asian Studies*, 15, 3 (1981), p. 414.

[4] Johannes H. Voigt, "Cooperation or Confrontation?: War and Congress Politics, 1939-42," in D.A. Low (ed.), *Congress and the Raj: Facets of the Indian Struggle, 1917-47*, 2nd Edition (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 349-374.

suppressed by the British, in a show of force not seen since the Mutiny.[5] New, if somewhat unreliable, collaborators were found in Muhammad Ali Jinnah's Muslim League. Beyond this, that bulwark of the British Raj, the Indian Army, increased in size ten-fold to a staggering 2.5 million men, making it the largest volunteer army in history.[6] Scholars have argued that British resolve to maintain the Raj during the "test" of the world war and India's major contribution to the war effort, in both men and material, constitutes an important dimension of this wider imperial revival of 1939-45.[7]

But, although the 1.2 billion yards of cloth per year produced in Indian mills "clothed the armies East of Suez," during the war, it is debatable whether the Emperor, or in this case, the King-Emperor, was indeed wearing clothes.[8] Despite these outward signs of resurgence, the Indian Empire teetered on a precipice during the war. The economic cum military relationship that undergirded the entire imperial project in South Asia since the nineteenth century was in tatters. The Indian Army was a sight to behold, but in a bizarre inversion of the imperial model, much of the bill for it had been footed by the British taxpayer after a 1940 agreement between London and Delhi. Britain emerged from the war a *debtor* to India.[9] There were other aspects of retreat. The Muslim League may have been allies, but this was a marriage of convenience. Jinnah and the League were not the same as the old-style collaborators, personified by Punjab's Sir Sikander Hayat Khan and his agriculturalist Unionist party.[10] The vaunted "steel frame" of the Indian Civil Service (ICS) was also a shadow of its former self, and the war had rapidly

[5] Arun Chandra Bhuyan, *The Quit India Movement: The Second World War and Indian Nationalism* (Delhi: Manas Publications, 1975); and Judith M. Brown, *Modern India: The Origins of an Asian Democracy, 2nd Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 318-325.

[6] Sri Nandan Prasad, *Expansion of the Armed Forces and Defence Organisation, 1939-45* (Calcutta: Orient Longmans, 1956), p. 78.

[7] Gallagher, *Decline*, pp. 135-41.

[8] Indivar Kamtekar, "A Different War Dance: State and Class in India 1939–1945," in *Past and Present*, 176, 1 (2002), p. 195.

[9] See Gallagher and Seal, "Britain and India," pp. 412-414. Also see P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688-2000*, 2nd Edition (London: Longman, 2002), pp. 560-562; and B.R. Tomlinson's incomparable *The Political Economy of the Raj, 1914-1947: The Economics of Decolonization in India* (London, Macmillan, 1979).

[10] For the Punjab Unionist Party see Ian Talbot, "The Unionist Party and Punjabi Politics, 1923-1947," in D.A. Low (ed.), *The Political Inheritance of Pakistan* (London: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 86-105; and Ian Talbot, "Deserted Collaborators: The Political Background to the Rise and Fall of the Punjab Unionist Party, 1923-47,"in the *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, xi (1982), pp. 73-93.

increased the rate of Indianization. The ICS was 50% Indian by war's end.[11] The most tragic sign of this weakness was the calamity of the Bengal Famine in 1943.[12] Despite the bravado of the war years, by 1945 the British in India, now clad in soft hat and opened neck bush shirt rather than solar topi and tie, were nearing the end.[13]

Events on the Frontier followed a similar pattern. The Second World War on the North-West Frontier was a quiet one. The British began the war in Asia facing the wrong direction. Sticking to what they knew, the British reckoned that any invasion of India would take place through its Northwestern marches rather than the jungles of Burma and Assam.[14] Elaborate concrete bunkers and tank defences were constructed along all the major passes on the Frontier and Cunningham launched an ambitious propaganda campaign among the Frontier mullahs to discourage tribal cooperation with the Axis and their non-aggression pact allies, the Soviet Union.[15] Dr. Khan Sahib's Congress ministry resigned at the beginning of 1940, and Cunningham took up the reins of power under section 93, before passing it off to a Muslim League ministry in 1943.[16] With the settled districts under the control of either Cunningham or, later, the Muslim League, and the tribal belt uncharacteristically quiet, the British appeared to be in full control of the Frontier once again.

Yet, as in India as a whole, this seeming quiescence was only relative. At a time when the eastern Frontiers of India were in danger of being overrun by the Japanese juggernaut, the British had to put precious resources of men and material into garrisoning the Frontier in order to keep the tribes "under control." The North-West Frontier and

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[11] See Simon Epstein, "District Officers in Decline: The Erosion of British Authority in the Bombay Countryside, 1919 to 1947," in *Modern Asian Studies*, 16, 3 (1982), pp. 493-518.

[12] See Bikramjit De, "Imperial Governance and the Challenges of War: Management of Food Supplies in Bengal, 1943-44," *Studies in History*, 22, 1(2006), pp. 1-43; and Auriol Weigold, "Famine Management: The Bengal Famine (1942-1944) Revisited," *South Asia*, 22, 1 (1999), pp. 63-77.

[13] Yasmin Khan's *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (New Have: Yale University Press, 2007), gives a good description of the overall exhaustion among the British authorities in the wake of the Second World War.

[14] See Defence of India Plan, 1941, (IOR) L WS 1/530.

[15] Note on Propaganda through Mullahs, by Sir George Cunningham, April 1941, Cunningham Papers (IOR) D670/19.

[16] For the rise of the Muslim League in the NWFP see Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam, and Nationalism: Muslim Politics in the North-West Frontier Movement, 1937-47* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Waziristan in particular became, as a post-war review put it: the "cheapest concentration camp for Allied servicemen the Axis ever possessed."[17] Aside from the massive troop presence the British bought the relative peace on the Frontier with Punjabi wheat. At a time when millions in Bengal were starving, the Government of India imported thousands of tons of grain in order to make up any possible shortfalls among the Pathans of the North-West Frontier.[18] Waziristan remained, in Linlithgow's words: "a plague spot." The tribesmen continued to raid into the administered areas and the Faqir of Ipi continued to attack military convoys and kill British officers on patrol.[19]

Members of the Frontier administration were beginning to sound more and more like their Congress detractors of the 1930s. The fact that Cunningham was willing to carry out a program of food procurement reflects a wider shift towards the nationalists' argument that poverty and hunger might play a significant role in the "problem" of the North-West Frontier. By 1943 even Cunningham, a supporter of the forward policy since its inception, admitted economics played a substantial role in tribal unrest.[20] Many officers now felt a deep despondency over the central tenets of a Frontier policy premised on military force as the primary means of pacification. By the final months of the war, with fiscal restrictions and troop reductions looming, the major question became whether the tribal belt should still be garrisoned by regular soldiers and what the new policy should be if they were removed. Summing this mood up in a speech on Frontier policy in 1944, the former Resident in Waziristan and, admittedly, a long-term opponent of the forward policy, Ambrose Dundas, remarked that: "The main source of argument is whether it is right to locate a garrison at Razmak or not. That is what is really all that

[17] Report of the Frontier Committee, 1945, (IOR) L P&S 12/3266.

[18] Fraser Noble, *Something in India* (London: Pentland Press, 1997), p. 278. Also see T.A.F. Noble, "An Experiment in Foodgrain Procurement: A Case Study in Planning in an Undeveloped Area," *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 5, 2 (1957), pp. 175-185.

[19] Letter from Linlithgow to Leo Amery (Secretary of State for India), 29 August 1940, (IOR) L P&S 12/3265.

[20] Note by Sir George Cunningham on North-West Frontier Policy, 1943, 5 June 1943, Cunningham Papers D670/13.

people mean now when they think they are arguing for a forward or a close-border policy."[21]

REASSESMENTS

The conclusion of the war prompted a fresh review of Frontier policy.[22] With Linlithgow's 1939 recommendations in mind, a committee was formed under Major-General Sir Francis Tuker in 1944 and charged with recommending a new policy.[23] The Viceroy, Lord Wavell, noted that "the old see-saw of frontier policy goes on, much as it has gone on for the last 100 years, without getting any nearer to a permanent solution."[24] The Report of the Frontier Committee echoed long-held British opinions in diagnosing the problem, stating: "if the love of independence were in itself a virtue it would have a commendable aspect; for the Pathan's most striking trait which lies at the root of all his actions is his fierce independence." Yet for the Pathan this independence meant license, it meant "the right of the individual to resist any curtailment of his liberty, irrespective of the needs of his neighbors or its repercussions on contiguous communities."[25]

Despite these "deficiencies" in the Pathan character, the Tuker Committee concluded that it was the British, and not the tribesmen, who were responsible for the "disappointing" lack of "civilization" in the tribal belt and Waziristan in particular. For,

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[21] Ambrose Dundas, "The Problem of Watch and Ward on the North-West Frontier: A Lecture delivered by Mr. Dundas, C.I.E., I.C.S., lately Resident in Waziristan, in Delhi on the 5th of August 1944" (New Delhi, 1944), p. 8, L P&S 12/3265. In the early years of his career, Dundas, who later served as the Pakistani Governor of NWFP from 1948 to 1949, was privately described by the staunch forward policy advocate, Claude Bremner in letter to another forward man, C.E. Bruce, as an admitted "close borderite" and a "disappointment" (Major Claude Bremner, to Lt.-Colonel C.E. Bruce, 1 June 1929, Bruce Papers (IOR) F163/20.

[22] In 1940 the then Secretary of State for India, Lord Zetland, approved of the recommendations outlined in Linlithgow's memorandum. Zetland recommended, however, that a new appraisal would be needed at the cessation of hostilities with Germany (Zetland to Linlithgow, 26 February 1940, L P&S 12/3265).

[23] Tuker later served as Eastern Commander of the Indian Army and was therefore responsible for security in Bengal and Bihar during the communal massacres of 1946-47. See Sir Francis Tuker, *While Memory Serves: The Last Two Years of British Rule in India* (London: Cassel, 1950).

[24] Wavell's Diary entry for 31 October 1945, in Sir Penderel Moon (ed.), *Wavell: The Viceroy's Journal* (Karachi, Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 179.

[25] Report of the Frontier Committee, 1945.

"while the military administration supposedly has [the tribesman] under control, [the tribesman] in fact has the administration in control." The Tuker Committee recommended sweeping changes in policy: regular forces on the Frontier should be drawn back to the settled districts. The garrisons at Razmak, Wana, and in the Khyber Pass would be replaced by "tribal Scouts and Khassadars." These tribal levies, under the command of Political Agents, would serve as the sole "law and order" component in the tribal agencies. [26] At its core, the proposed policy reverted to the Curzon formula of 1901.

The success of this new policy depended on a somewhat nebulous "increase in political control in Waziristan and the disarmament" of the tribes.[27] Cunningham believed that a total withdrawal (including Scouts and Khassadars) from the tribal belt and the implementation of a sort of "Great Wall of China" between it and the settled districts would be both "pusillanimous and unnecessary." Yet he agreed that the military component of the forward policy had indeed contributed to the tribal problem. He wrote:

> If it is true – as it must be – that our ultimate object is to improve conditions of life in Waziristan, the presence of regular troops is an obstacle. Everyone seems to agree that troops are an irritant to the tribes. This is more true, in my opinion, today than it was 15 years ago. I see no likelihood of the Army, for their part, ever regarding the people of Waziristan as anything but a foreign enemy. The Army is not to blame. But the atmosphere is not conducive to development. [28]

Cunningham thus urged the Government of India to follow the Report's recommendation and withdraw regular forces from the tribal areas. As for Tuker's talk of tribal disarmament, Caroe, who was then serving as India's Foreign Secretary, believed that this could only occur as a by-product of social and economic development.[29]

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[26] Report of the Frontier Committee, 1945.

[27] Report of the Frontier Committee, 1945.

[28] Comments by the Governor of the North-West Frontier Province on the Frontier Committee's Report, 1945, 12 July, 1945, L P&S 12/3266.

[29] Secret Memorandum by the External Affairs Department, Government of India, April 1946, L P&S 12/3266. Caroe had become Foreign Secretary to the Government of India in 1939. He replaced Aubrey Metcalfe who was eased into the position of Resident of and Agent to the Governor-General in Baluchistan before retiring in 1943. Whereas the events on the Frontier in 1930 had tarnished Metcalfe's reputation for decisive, clear thinking action (though it must be admitted that he nevertheless rose to the heights of a knighthood and was India's Foreign Secretary), Caroe's behavior in this period essentially made his career. Linlithgow was looking for an intellectual heavyweight and man of action as the World War loomed and Caroe, rather than Metcalfe, fitted the description.

Cunningham agreed that no "sensible person" could disagree that disarmament would be a good thing. But this could only be done through force of arms. The Indian government possessed neither the troops nor the funds to pursue such a large-scale operation. The Governor was also alive to the changing constitutional situation in the sub-continent. The Labour Party, under Clement Attlee, the man who had penned the famous analogy of reforms on the Frontier being akin to a cigarette in a powder magazine in 1929, had come to power in the general election of July 1945, and this, combined with the breakdown of the All-Indian situation, meant that Indian independence was on the near horizon.[30] Cunningham wrote:

> It seems to me obvious that, on the eve of impending constitutional changes of great magnitude in India, it is quite impossible to lay this down as our objective, I feel very doubtful if any of the big political parties in India would face a policy of this character, the first step in which is a Waziristan war.[31]

Disarmament was out of the question, but at a conference held in Peshawar in April 1946, the Government of India agreed that if approved by London, the Wana and Razmak camps would be evacuated by autumn 1947 and summer 1948 respectively.[32] Regardless of the future constitutional arrangement in India and on the Frontier, the British intended to get out of Waziristan.

There remained, however, the difficulty of increasing "political control" while withdrawing troops from areas like Waziristan. Tuker's Report recommended the institution of development schemes in the tribal tracts.[33] The Committee argued that poverty was not the problem *per se*, for the tribal tracts were often awash in cash from their government allowances. The problem was the lack of infrastructure. This they argued was a fundamental root of the problem. The Report stressed the need to ensure education, employment outside of the tribal tracts and medical facilities. It was

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[30] See R.J. Moore, *Escape from Empire: The Attlee Government and the Indian Problem* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

[31] Comments by the Governor of the North-West Frontier Province on the Frontier Committee's Report, 1945.

[32] Record of a Conference held at Government House, Peshawar, on 24th April 1946, to Discuss the Plan for Substitution of Civil Armed Forces for Regular Troops in the Tribal Areas of the North-West Frontier, L P&S 12/3266.

[33] Report of the Frontier Committee, 1945.

recommended that both a staff and funds be provided to the provincial administration to carry out new schemes.

Although Cunningham was himself not entirely sure if the root of the Frontier problem lay in poverty, he was now in general agreement with the need for government sponsored economic development.[34] Like all provincial governors he had received post war directives from the Government of India to initiate development schemes and had begun to pursue a policy of economic development, placing the scheme in the hands of Lieut.-Colonel Leslie Mallam, a longstanding opponent of the forward policy.[35] Writing on the North-West Frontier problem in 1946, Mallam argued that the net result of the military intervention, allowances, and road building that accompanied the policy was that:

> Tribal life has gone on away from the roads and cantonments, much in the same way as it did before these made their appearance, but with a difference – that while on the one hand some of the more superficial modern habits and accomplishments such as tea drinking and motor driving and a certain new wealth have been acquired, on the other hand there has been a steady deterioration in the internal affairs of the tribes.[36]

This had led to a gradual slide into anarchy and the empowerment of "powerfully armed gangs". Mallam advocated a solution to this anarchy through economic development, arguing that education and medical facilities were far more popular than roads. With the Second World War behind them, India, "like the rest of the world", was becoming increasingly "planning-minded."[37] Crucially, Mallam's plan had been drawn up explicitly

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[34] Comments by the Governor of the North-West Frontier Province on the Frontier Committee's Report, 1945.

[35] See G.L. Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis and a Cassock* (London: Privately Published, 1978), Mallam Papers, Centre of South Asian Studies, Cambridge University (CSAS).

[36] Lieut.-Colonel G.L. Mallam, C.I.E. "The N.-W. Frontier Problem," *The Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, 76 (1946), p. 387. In giving his permission for Mallam to publish this article, Cunningham expressed major differences of opinion with Mallam's indictment of the forward policy (Cunningham to Mallam, 22 March 1946, Mallam Papers).

[37] Mallam, along with Ambrose Dundas, had been critical of the forward policy since the 1930s. It is interesting to note that Caroe and the External Affairs department originally intended both men to participate as members on Tuker's Frontier Committee. This was decided against, however, on account of the testimony they, as senior officers, could provide the Committee in favor of a new policy. This suggests that the Government of India was set against the forward policy even before Tuker's Committee began its investigation (Letter from Sir Olaf Caroe to the Hon. Lt.-Col. W.R. Hay, C.S.I., C.I.E., Agent to the Governor-General, Resident and Chief Commissioner in Baluchistan, 31 August 1945, L P&S 12/3265).

to appeal to the leadership of both the Congress and the Muslim League.[38] His private conversations with both Congress and Muslim League leaders in NWFP convinced him that a new development policy would have the support of the two major parties, thus making it sustainable in an era of constitutional ferment. This was a far cry from the 1920s.[39]

Mallam informed Fraser Noble, his assistant in the Provincial Development Department, that the events of 1930-31 had been the most dramatic upheaval of his life. In the wake of several major personal tragedies, including the death of his wife and small daughter; he would not be able to survive another similar episode.[40] He believed that the fate of the tribal areas and the settled districts were inextricable from one another and only through development in both regions could another major tribal conflagration be prevented.[41] With the conviction that the tribal agencies could no longer be separated from their Pathan brethren on the plains, Mallam proposed a 450-page, Rs. 27/- crore development scheme that would address agriculture, animal husbandry, medical service, public health, jails, public works, forestry, local self-government and provincial finances.[42] Mallam asserted that no program could be pursued in the province without a constructive program of political and economic development in the tribal areas. He also recommended the expansion medical and educational facilities throughout the tribal areas. He stipulated that no compulsory education could be supported until "political conditions permit."[43]

Significantly, Mallam also pushed for the establishment of "indigenous" self-government in the tribal areas.[44] These ambitious plans encountered resistance, or in the case of Cunningham and his successor at Government House, Caroe, apathy, throughout

[38] Mallam to Sir Olaf Caroe, 29 May 1944, Mallam Papers.
[39] Mallam, "The N.-W. Frontier Problem," p. 387.
[40] Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, pp. 92-95.
[41] Noble, *Something in India*, p. 284; and Mallam, "The N.-W. Frontier Problem", p. 392.
[42] Lt.-Col. G.L. Mallam, *The Post-War Development Plan for the N.-W.F.P. and Tribal Areas* (Peshawar: Government Stationary and Printing North-West Frontier Province, 1945), Library of Congress (LOC).
[43] Mallam, Post-War Development Plan, p. 66.
[44] Plan for the Trans-border tribes by G.L. Mallam (IOR) L P&S 12/3278; and Caroe to Mallam, 14 March 1944, Mallam Papers.

1946. Much of this hostility either stemmed from officials wedded to the belief that government had no role to play in the economy or that the Pathan had no interest in hospitals and schools. In March 1947, however, with strong support of Dr. Khan Sahib and his Congress ministry which, having won the general elections of January 1946, hoped to use the development scheme as a tool against the rising tide of the Muslim League, the Government of India agreed to contribute the necessary funds to make the plan a reality.[45] Time, however, had run out. The fact that the government had commissioned such a study in the first place and then given its consent, despite the political situation in 1946-47, demonstrates a remarkable change in attitudes towards the policy in Waziristan. In retirement, Mallam wrote that the importance of the development scheme was "less in its intrinsic value as a contribution to the cultural and ecological development of the Indus right bank, than in its existence as a British-Indian attempt at a solution of the Frontier tribal problem. It must be admitted (I think with shame) that the British failed to solve this problem, but it can no longer be said that no serious effort was made."[46]

THE CRISIS OF THE POLITICAL SERVICE

At the same time that Leslie Mallam was fighting for his development scheme, the North-West Frontier was against at the center of a controversy pitting the Frontier service against the All-Indian Congress Party, and, in particular, Jawaharlal Nehru. In 1946 and 1947 the NWFP played a crucial role in the feasibility of India's partition and the creation of Pakistan. Since the NWFP was a majority Muslim province, Jinnah's Pakistan would be impossible without its inclusion. Yet it was Congress rather than the Muslim League that controlled this 96% Muslim province. Reasoning that as long as there was a Congress ministry in Peshawar, there was no hope of the NWFP acceding to Pakistan, the Congress High Command made it a primary goal to keep Khan Sahib's government in place. Moreover, Congress leaders such as Nehru still believed that

[45] Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, pp. 101-104.
[46] Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, p. 108.

Britain's policies on the Frontier were barbaric and counterproductive. The Government of India may have decided to end the forward policy in the tribal areas, but the fact that they still were engaging in aerial bombing of "recalcitrant" tribes was unacceptable.

Cunningham, who had served as Governor since 1937, enjoyed an excellent relationship with Khan Sahib. They worked well together and mingled socially. When Khan Sahib languished in a jail during "Quit India," his English wife, Mary, often visited Government House and enjoyed a beer or sherry with the Governor and his wife, Robin.[47] There was real sympathy between the both the two men. Much of this stemmed from the fact that they were consummate politicians. Cunningham, had enjoyed a golden career at Oxford and then climbed the ranks of the Indian bureaucracy while simultaneously managing to be respected and liked by all he met – in part because he always kept his cards so close to his vest. A former member of the Indian Medical Service, Khan Sahib was also well liked by both the Indian political establishment and most political officers, who honestly respected him despite the fact that he was a "Congress-wallah." Cunningham and Khan Sahib also shared a certain political and ideological flexibility. It was a good relationship.

Cunningham, however, retired in March 1946 and was replaced as Governor by Olaf Caroe, who had been serving as Foreign Secretary since 1939.[48] Wavell, an excellent judge of people, had reservations about Caroe's appropriateness for the position. Caroe had a record that few could match, but the Viceroy thought he "always seems to me too narrow, theoretical and pedantic."[49] Cunningham, however, persuaded Wavell to appoint Caroe.

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[47] Sir George Cunningham to his Sister, 10 January 1941, Cunningham Papers (IOR) D670/38.

[48] The Second World War had brought new attention to the previous backwater of India's northeastern marches. In a sign of the times, Caroe was replaced as Foreign Secretary by Hugh Weightman, who had spent much of his career on the *North-East* Frontier, rather than the North-West Frontier, as a political agent in Assam.

[49] Wavell to Lord Pethick Lawrence (Secretary of State for India), 5 August 1945, quoted in Peter John Brobst, *The Future of the Great Game: Sir Olaf Caroe, India's Independence, and the Defense of Asia* (Akron: University of Akron Press, 2005), p. 105. Brobst's work deals with Caroe's status as the "official mind" of the Great Game in the final decade of British rule in India and the first years of independence. It examines Caroe's career as India's Foreign Secretary, Governor of NWFP, and his subsequent activities in retirement. For Caroe's Governorship also see, Parshotam Mehra's excellent *The North-West Frontier Drama, 1945-47: A Reassessment* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1998).

Caroe's relationship with Khan Sahib lacked the warmth of his predecessor's. Caroe genuinely liked Khan Sahib, but over the course of the spring and summer of 1946 the relationship between the men grew increasingly acerbic as Caroe grew impatient with Khan Sahib and the latter became increasingly intransigent.[50] Caroe, who had been at the forefront of those calling for a decisive blow against the nationalists in 1930-31, now found himself in harness with the very men he had once sought to crush.[51] Problems between Congress and Caroe came to a head in the late summer when the British began a bombing campaign against the Shabi Khel Mahsuds. The bombings were a response to the kidnapping of J.O.S. Donald, the Political Agent for South Waziristan, whose father had been a legendary Resident in Waziristan during the First World War. Believing him to be an army engineer, Mahsud tribesmen had abducted Donald and then released him unharmed several weeks later. Despite the apparent assurance that they would not be attacked from the Resident in Waziristan, K.C. Packman, a political officer of a notoriously dubious character, Caroe and the Army decided to bomb.[52] Echoing Lord Reading's sanguine views on bombing 20 years before, Caroe doubted whether it would lead to any "formidable political reactions."[53]

Caroe was wrong. News of the bombings reached the press and Abdul Ghaffar Khan issued a statement condemning this "wholesale slaughter." More troubling were the implications this had for the Congress government on the Frontier. In September 1946 an interim government was created in Delhi and Jawaharlal Nehru was sworn in as the External Affairs member. One of the major reasons Nehru took this particular portfolio was that it included tribal affairs. The fact that this bombing of tribal civilians was ostensibly carried out under the auspices of Nehru's department was not only an embarrassment for this old critic of Britain's Frontier policy, but potentially disastrous.

[50] See Mehra, *The North-West Frontier Drama*, pp. 59-63.

[51] It is important to note that Cunningham, who enjoyed an excellent relationship with the nationalist leadership, was away from the Frontier throughout most of the 1930-33 period – first as Private Secretary to Lord Irwin, and then on a years' leave. It is possible, therefore, that he lacked some of the emotional baggage that men like Caroe carried from that experience.

[52] Abdur Rashid, *Civil Service on the Frontier* (Peshawar: Privately Published, 1977), p 44.

[53] Caroe to Wavell, quoted in Mehra, *The North-West Frontier Drama*, p. 67.

Communalists, both in India and on the Frontier, could now charge that this was but the first taste of the impending "Hindu Raj."[54]

Nehru had intended to visit the Frontier in hopes of garnering support for the province's Congress Ministry, but the bombings sealed his intensions to visit both the settled districts and the tribal areas. Caroe was opposed. The communal problem on the Frontier (and India) had grown in recent months and he believed the tribesmen would repudiate Nehru's tour.[55] Wavell's Private Secretary, however, believed that barring Nehru from the agencies was "impossibly out of date," and the tour went ahead.[56] Nehru's visit was a disaster. The future Prime Minister of India, along with his chaperones, Abdul Ghaffar and Khan Sahib, were verbally and even physically attacked as they made their progress through the tribal areas.[57] Caroe, who had read classics at Oxford, saw it as a "Greek tragedy on the old theme of hubris followed by nemesis."[58] Nehru, however, blamed the failure of his tour on Caroe and the Political Service.[59]

The fallout from this fiasco was threefold. First, the tour underlined the fact that the communal tensions that had spread across the subcontinent were just as strong if not stronger on the Frontier – this boded ill for the idea that the NWFP would remain outside of Jinnah's Pakistan. Secondly, the tour produced a high level of enmity between Nehru and Caroe. Nehru and his Congress colleagues were increasingly convinced that Sir Olaf was a Muslim League sympathizer. Lastly, Nehru's tour – and his accusations about the Political Service – led to a crisis of confidence among the Frontier cadre from which it never recovered.

Whereas the ICS as a whole had experienced their moment of doubt in the immediate aftermath of the First World War – a period that witnessed a number of high

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[54] Mehra, *The North-West Frontier Drama*, pp. 68-69.

[55] Caroe to Wavell, 28 September 1946, (IOR) R 3/1/92.

[56] G.E.B. Abell to Wavell, 30 September 1946, R 3/1/92.

[57] Full descriptions of Nehru's ill fated tour can be found in Mehra, *The North-West Frontier Drama*, pp. 74-78; and Charles Chevenix Trench, *Viceroy's Agent* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987), pp. 324-327. See also Brobst, *The Future of the Great Game*, p. 116. For an excellent overview of Nehru and Abdul Ghaffar Khan's view of the Frontier tour, see D. G. Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan: Faith is a Battle* (Bombay: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1967), pp. 384-394.

[58] Caroe to Wavell, 23 October 1946, R 3/1/92.

[59] Confidential: Note on My Tour in the Tribal Areas of the North-West Frontier, by Jawaharlal Nehru, 24 October 1946, R 3/1/92.

profile resignations and a dramatic fall-off in recruitment – the Political Service suffered their crisis of confidence in these final months of the British Raj.[60] Nehru made a terrible impression on the Frontier officers he met. Even a relatively sympathetic Political like Leslie Mallam was left with one impression only: "intellectual arrogance." Believing that Nehru would be eager to speak with him about development issues, Mallam was surprised that the nationalist leader treated him like a "*Naib Tehsildar*," instead.[61] Responding to Khan Sahib's admittance that his ministry no longer trusted the Political Service, the D.C. for Mardan, Gerald Curtis, informed Nehru that the Political Service could not function in these conditions.[62] They had, as Fraser Noble recalled, lost their "prestige."[63] Curtis informed Nehru that unless he made a public statement about the trustworthiness of the Frontier cadre, he must "give British officers their gratuities, proportionate pensions and bowler hats" and bid them farewell. Informing Caroe of his own resignation, Curtis wrote that he believed it was "the duty of every British official in the Political Service on the frontier to resign, here and now…If officers of our service do not protest vigorously against the abominable insinuations made against it…, we shall lose both our own self respect and that of the Pathan population."[64] Though few went so far as to resign so early, the feeling of despondency was widely felt throughout the Frontier Political Service.[65]

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[60] Unlike the ICS, which was 50% Indianized at this time, the Political Service remained overwhelmingly European. Of its 124 serving members, only 17 were Indian. The majority of the Indian Politicals, however, were in the Frontier service, among them the future Governor General and President of Pakistan, Iskander Ali Mirza. Another major difference was that most ICS men believed that independence was near at hand and had been prepared for it for nearly a decade. This was not the case with the Political Service (See Roland Hunt and John Harrison, *The District Officer in India, 1930-1947* (London: Scolar Press, 1980)).

[61] "Junior District Official," in Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, p. 105.

[62] G.C.S. Curtis to Caroe, 23 October 1946, R 3/1/92.

[63] Noble, *Something in India*, p. 294.

[64] Curtis to Caroe, 23 October 1946.

[65] See, for instance, Norval Mitchell (David Mitchell (ed.)), *The Quiet People of India: A Unique Record of the Final Years of the British Raj* (Sarasota: Peppertree Press, 2007), pp. 219-221. Overall despondency was further increased in this period by the suicide of J.O.S. Donald, the Political Agent whose kidnapping had prompted the August and September bombings. He was released unharmed and went to the NWFP Governor's retreat at Nathiagali to spend a couple days with the Caroes. The Governor pressed him not to return to Tank to resume his duties. But Donald insisted. A few days after his return to Tank a delegation of his former kidnappers came to see him. They reminded Donald of his father and how in his day the "Feranghi's word could always be trusted." They claimed Donald had promised them that they

Over the coming months the political situation on the Frontier deteriorated. The Muslim League, aware of Congress's overwhelming majority in the Provincial Legislature, resolved to remove Khan Sahib's ministry through extra-parliamentary means: thuggery, demonstrations, and appeals to religious bigotry. Meanwhile, Wavell was replaced by Lord Mountbatten, who was given sweeping powers to help him enforce a political settlement. At the same time Congress, both at the local and central level, were "gunning for Caroe," as Wavell had put it.[66] As their position became increasingly perilous in the face of the Muslim League's "civil-disobedience," Khan Sahib and his allies became convinced that Caroe was in bed with the Muslim League.[67] This was false. Caroe remained the man who had taken such a jaundiced view of nationalism and Indian politicians in the 1930s. He cared for neither the Congress nor the Muslim League. As usual, Wavell's assessment, that Caroe had "never yet really reconciled himself to the idea of our leaving India" seems the closest to the truth.[68]

After months of negotiation, Mountbatten, Nehru, and Jinnah announced an agreed plan for India's future on June 3, 1947. Indian independence would be moved from June 1948 to August 1947. Moreover, the Indian Empire would be partitioned between Hindustan and Pakistan. Unlike the other provinces where accession would be decided by the provincial legislature, the future of the NWFP would be decided by plebiscite. In preparation for this referendum Mountbatten was bombarded with calls for

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would not be bombed but now their homes were destroyed. He got up saying he was going over to the house for a few minutes. When Donald failed to return, his A.P.A. went to check and found him sprawling over desk. He had shot himself in the head. On a paper in front of him was written "I have failed in my duty. I have lived a lie." The Frontier was a violent place where death was a regular occurrence, but it seems that this death made a real impact on the Frontier cadre in the twilight of Empire. Caroe took it particularly hard. He subsequently wrote: [Donald] felt he had let down not only himself but also me (to be egotistic) and his father, and perhaps the Mahsuds too." Caroe claimed that Wavell blamed him for making him go back and said I really killed him." Caroe responded "Sir, I am pretty sure that you as a Wykehamist like me, would have done the same" (Caroe to Akbar Ahmed, quoted in Akbar S. Ahmed, *Resistance and Control in Pakistan*, Revised Edition (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 177-178). Also see Unpublished Memoirs of G.C.S. Curtis, Collected Indian Civil Service Memoirs (IOR) F180/58; Unpublished Memoirs of Mrs. H.A. Barnes, Collected Indian Political Service Memoirs (IOR) F226/1; Caroe Unpublished Memoirs, Caroe Papers (IOR) F203/7; Noble, *Something in India*, p. 294; and Trench, *Viceroy's Agent*, pp. 220-221.

[66] Entry for 6 November 1946, Moon, *Wavell*, p. 373.

[67] Mehra, *The North-West Frontier Drama*, Chapter Three.

[68] Entry for 8 August 1946, Moon, *Wavell*, p. 329.

Caroe's ouster. Nehru informed the Viceroy that he believed neither the Governor nor most of the senior Political Officers on the Frontier were fit for service. Yet he never charged Caroe with Muslim League sympathies. Instead he wrote: "the part that Sir Olaf Caroe played as Deputy Commissioner of Peshawar in 1930 when there was large scale shooting and killing of peaceful demonstrators still evokes bitter memories."[69] The ghosts of the repressions of the early 1930s were coming back to haunt the administration.

Mountbatten accepted his friend's suggestion and asked Caroe to stand down for the duration of the plebiscite. Caroe acknowledged his fate, but, in a sign that the old Frontier spirit had not died, he wrote "in the long run I believe HMG will not be able to divorce themselves from…this delicate and difficult Frontier."[70] Yet here, in the final hours of the Raj, these words had an overwhelming hollowness. The British Governor of the NWFP had been removed at the behest of nationalist "agitation."[71] More so than anywhere else in British India, the British on the Frontier did not adjust to the rise of nationalism. In the end Caroe was a victim of his own, and indeed his service's, intransigence.

THE PLEBISCITE AND PAKISTAN

Congress was also in trouble. The plebiscite took place in July 1947. Khan Sahib and Congress boycotted it and the NWFP overwhelmingly voted for Pakistan.[72] Jinnah and the Muslim League showed themselves to have a very different agenda on the

[69] Nehru to Mountbatten, 4 June 1947, (IOR) R 3/1/170.

[70] Mehra, *The North-West Frontier Drama*, p. 159.

[71] After several months in Kashmir waiting vainly for his recall as Governor from either Mountbatten or Jinnah, Caroe left India in August. He had an active and influential retirement, penning countless articles and writing books on the balance of power in Asia, a masterful study of the Pathans, and co-editing, with his old colleague Sir Evelyn Howell, a translation of the great Pashto poet, Khushhal Khan Khatak. Old wounds also healed over. When Khan Sahib or Abdul Ghaffar Khan's children visited Britain they often stayed with Sir Olaf and Caroe enjoyed the rare distinction of being invited for state visits to both India and Pakistan. He passed away in 1979. See Sir Olaf Caroe, *Wells of Power: The Oilfields of South-Western Asia: A Regional and Global Study* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1951); Sir Olaf Caroe, *Soviet Empire: The Turks of Central Asia and Stalinism* (London, Macmillan and Co., 1953); Sir Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans, 550B.C.-A.D.1957* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1958); and Evelyn Howell and Olaf Caroe, (eds.), *The Poems of Khushhal Khan Khatak* (Peshawar: Oxford University Press, 1963).

[72] Although only 51% of the eligible electorate voted in the referendum, 99% of those who did plumped for Pakistan.

Frontier than their Congress forbearers. Jinnah, who, it has been argued, took up the role of Governor General of the new Pakistani Dominion in order to dismiss Khan Sahib's Ministry under section 93, made no major changes in Frontier policy after he took control on August 15, 1947.[73] More flexible British political officers were invited to stay, or invited back. Cunningham, for instance, was recalled from his Scottish retirement to once again take up the reins of Government in NWFP.[74] Leslie Mallam offered to stay on and help direct development policies in the tribal areas, but, in a move that reflected wider Pakistani disregard for the economic development of the region, his offer was rejected.[75] Other officers, like Ambrose Dundas and John Dring, stayed on well into the 1950s.

In a sense the Frontier mentality of the Indian Political Service enjoyed a renaissance under the Pakistani regime. The agencies were still set apart from the settled districts and remained under the control of political agents employed by the central government. Political parties continued to be banned from the tribal tracts, while "law and order," in the form of the hated Frontier Crimes Regulation was introduced into the agencies. The only major difference was the fundamental Pakistani conceit that as co-religionists, they would have an easier time "controlling" the tribes than their British predecessors. This philosophy is seen in the decision to unleash Waziristan's tribesmen on Kashmir in a vain and brutal bid to annex that benighted kingdom to Pakistan at the end of 1947.

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[73] Ayesha Jalal, "Inheriting the Raj: Jinnah and the Governor-Generalship Issue," *Modern Asian Studies*, 19, 1 (1985), pp. 29-53.

[74] Cunningham stayed on in Peshawar until May of 1948 when he returned home to Scotland. He enjoyed an active retirement involving himself in the affairs of the University of St. Andrews and the retired ICS association. He died in while having breakfast with Lord Halifax's widow in 1963.

[75] Mallam to Lt-General Sir Rob Lockhart (Governor, NWFP), 28 June 1947, Mallam Papers. Also see Mallam, *A Pair of Chaplis*, p. 108. Mallam went up to the hill station at Nathiagali in the final days of British rule and encountered Olaf and Kitty Caroe, recently returned from waiting out the Frontier referendum in Kashmir. Mallam informed his sister that the Caroes, who would board their ship back to Britain on August 20th, were "in a sad state of depression, and I am sorry for them – up to a point. But personally I refuse to be unduly depressed by the present situation. I have never linked my career with the continuance of British rule in India. Both Caroe and I have had the benefit of more than 30 years in of the finest services in the world" (Leslie Mallam to Helen Mallam, 12 August 1947, Mallam Papers). Mallam returned to Britain in September 1947 and entered studies to be ordained in the Church of England. He succeeded and at the age of 54 became a country vicar, retiring in 1965. Mallam stands out, not only for his individualism and clear empathy for people in all walks of life but also for the strikingly candid nature of his memoirs.

This philosophy also contributed to the decision to follow the Tuker Committee's recommendations to end the forward policy and withdraw regular troops from Waziristan.[76] Further assisted by the Pakistani Commander-in-Chief, General Sir Frank Messervy's report that "the Pakistan Army is in such a parlous state that [Messervy] must, if possible, withdraw all troops from Waziristan within the next three months," Jinnah, Messervy, and Cunningham agreed to evacuate Waziristan by January 1948.[77] The new policy was enacted in November and December 1947. As this was essentially a return to Curzon's modified close-border policy of 1901, the surprisingly peaceful evacuation was aptly named "Operation Curzon."[78] Upon hearing that this policy was going to be enacted, that old enemy of the forward policy, Sir John Maffey, who was now serving as British Reprehensive to Eire, wrote his former comrade in arms, Lord Hailey: "It has taken a long time for sanity to prevail! Perhaps the lesson had to be learnt."[79]

Some lessons had been learnt since 1919, but not nearly enough. Having gained the NWFP through dubious means, Pakistan found that the region was just as restive under its regime as it had been under the British. In both the settled areas and the tribal tracts the Pathan nationalist Pahktunistan movement threatened the nascent Pakistani state. The Khan Brothers were again thrown into jail, and although the more flexible Khan Sahib eventually mended his fences with the new administration and entered government, Abdul Ghaffar spent nearly as much time in jail under the Pakistanis as he had under the British.[80] In Waziristan, the quasi-colonial system of control was

[76] Ayesha Jalal, "India's Partition and the Defence of Pakistan: An Historical Perspective", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 15, 3 (1987), pp. 299-300; and Ayesha Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 42-43.

[77] Cunningham Diary: 20 September1947, Cunningham Papers (IOR) D670/6; and Cunningham Diary: 6 October 1947, Cunningham Papers D670/6.

[78] Lieut.-Colonel, H.E.M. Cotton, O.B.E., R.E., "Operation Curzon – the Evacuation of Waziristan," *The Royal Engineers Journal*, 62 (1948), pp. 183-196.

[79] Sir John Loader Maffey to Lord Hailey, 17 January 1946, Hailey Papers (IOR) E220/55.

[80] Dr. Khan Sahib became involved in the Pakhtunistan movement in the late 1940s and was rewarded for his opposition with several stints in Pakistani jails. Khan Sahib was flexible, however, and by 1954 he had mended fences with the new Pakistani regime. He reentered politics as Pakistan's minister for communications and, with the enactment of the One Unit Plan in 1955 he became the Chief Minister of West Pakistan, a post which put him at odds with his brother, Abdul Ghaffar Khan. He fell from power in 1958 and was assassinated shortly thereafter. In 1947 Abdul Ghaffar took the oath of allegiance to Pakistan as a member of the constituent assembly and severed the Red Shirts' ties to the Congress Party. The

continually challenged throughout the next decade by none other than the Faqir of Ipi. Relations with Afghanistan remained troubled and the North-West Frontier was again on the frontline of a new Great Game – the Cold War.[81] Curzon once noted that "No one who has ever read a page of Indian history will prophesy about the Frontier."[82] This held true for the years and decades that followed India's independence and the establishment of Pakistan. The British had departed, but the problem of the North-West Frontier remained.

Pakistani authorities continued to distrust him however, and when he tried to extend the Khudai Khidmatgar movement in 1948 he was arrested for sedition and his political party was banned. After six years he was released but, when he opposed the One Unit Scheme championed by his brother, he was once again imprisoned and was in and out of prison until he left for medical treatment in Britain in 1964. He then lived in self-imposed exile in Afghanistan until 1972. Upon his return to Pakistan he was again arrested by the Bhutto regime. He died in India in 1988, where he was hailed as a hero of the nationalist movement.

[81] See A. Martin Wainwright, *Inheritance of Empire: Britain, India, and the Balance of Power in Asia, 1938-55* (Westport: Praeger, 1994); and Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India, and Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

[82] Creagh Coen, Sir Terence, K.B.E., C.I.E., *The Indian Political Service: A Study in Indirect Rule* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1971), p. 200.

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